



Positive Handling Policy - Federation

Updating Policy Procedure

When a policy is due for review it will be emailed to the reviewer who will revise and highlight those updates and return the policy in full with the highlighted updates back to the Administrator.

When a policy reviewer becomes aware of **any updates** they will ask the Administrator to email the policy to them and follow the above procedure.

A policy is a statement of intent and the guidelines we follow, that is adopted by the Fortuna and Athena Federation's Governing Body.

Policy Reviewed by:

C. Chaplin – Fortuna
A. Smallcombe - Athena

Updated on:

October 2025

Date to be reviewed:

October 2026

Date ratified at FGM:

23 February 2026

Introduction

The term “Positive Handling” includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. Included in this framework are a small number of responses which may involve the use of force to control or restrain a pupil.

The term “physical restraint” is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. National Guidance (Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention: 27 June 2019) is followed in this policy. A clear and consistent positive handling policy supports pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within an ethos of mutual respect, care and safety.

Pupils with severe behavioural difficulties sometimes present a risk to themselves and others. Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 describes the circumstances in which teachers and others authorised by the Headteacher may use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils. Examples of when such action may be reasonable are to prevent injury to people, damage to property or the breakdown of discipline. This policy details how we implement this guidance at the Fortuna-Athena Federation. It should be considered alongside the most recent LEA policy statements and recent local and national guidance. It is designed to help staff to ensure that any actions they take are reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

School Expectations

The management takes seriously its duty of care towards pupils, employees and visitors to the school. Staff protection is an important part of child protection; both depend on confident and competent staff who feel supported by their management. This policy has a clear focus:

- The first and paramount consideration is the welfare of the children in our care.
- The second is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them.

Positive Behaviour Management

All physical interventions within the Fortuna-Athena Federation are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. The federation’s Behaviour Policy is intended to positively reinforce appropriate behaviour and application, whilst also encouraging pupils to take responsibility for improving their own behaviour.

Our graduated approach to risk reduction involves identifying and addressing early warning signs of escalating behaviour, learning from previous instances, communicating any factors which may influence behaviour and taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk. However, if unsafe behaviour were to arise staff have an additional responsibility to support all pupils and safely manage crises, if, and when, they occur.

Pupil Behaviour Management Plans

Each pupil within the Fortuna-Athena Federation has an individual behaviour plan and risk assessment informed by the pupil’s Education Health Care Plan, the admission interview with parents/carers and ongoing learning through day-to-day interactions with the young person.

The behaviour plan and risk assessment will be used as working documents to inform staff's understanding of the pupil's previously known behaviours (form, likelihood and severity) and also to detail appropriate strategies to support regulation and effectively manage occurrences of unsafe behaviour.

Modifications to the Environment

As schools catering for pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs, we know that some pupils within the Fortuna-Athena Federation may exhibit extreme and potentially dangerous behaviour. All staff within the Federation should therefore carefully consider the risk assessment and management of the immediate environment, both in advance of children using the space and as an ongoing consideration.

This requires consideration of secure storage for a range of everyday objects when they are not being used. For example:

- How is the availability of pointed implements (pens, pencils etc) controlled?
- What items are available to a dysregulated pupil that may use them as missiles?
- What objects are available to be used as blunt instruments?
- Do the objects considered on the previous points need to be left out all the time?

There must also be consideration of the use and layout of furniture. For example:

- Are there sharp edges or corners which present a risk?
- Is the design and arrangement of furniture safe and appropriate for pupils who exhibit extreme behaviour?
- Do seating plans show appropriate consideration of pupil's individual risk assessments?
- Is there a safe and comfortable place to sit with an agitated pupil?
- Are protocols in place to encourage pupils to take themselves to a safer place?

Dynamic Risk Assessment

Even with individual behaviour management plans and risk assessments, each behaviour incident requires a degree of in the moment risk assessment by the staff involved with consideration of the specific circumstances for that incident.

Dynamic risk assessments are a routine part of life for staff working with pupils who may exhibit extreme behaviour. Staff need to think ahead to identify risk, anticipate what might go wrong and take mitigating action. If a proposed activity or course of action involves unacceptable risk the correct decision is to do something else.

Factors which might influence a more immediate risk assessment, and therefore a decision about how to intervene, might include the proximity of peers, the immediate physical environment, the state of health and fitness of the staff member, their physical stature, competence, confidence and relationships with the pupils concerned.

Confidence and competence are often related to the level of staff training. Other than in an emergency, staff should only attempt physical controls when they are confident that such action will result in a reduction of risk. When faced with extreme behaviour, or even in a fight situation, the judgement may be that by becoming involved the member of staff will increase

the chance of somebody getting hurt. In this case the correct decision is to hold back from physical controls and other appropriate action should be taken.

Early Intervention and De-Escalation

Where there is sufficient opportunity and safety to intervene, staff can make a dynamic risk assessment to attempt de-escalation prior to the requirement for physical intervention. They can:

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reasoning.
- Give clear directions to the pupil/s to stop.
- Remind the pupil/s about rules and likely outcomes.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons
- Remove an audience away from where the incident is occurring.
- Use contingent touch to guide the pupil away from an immediate trigger / to a less stimulating environment such as a sofa area.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and request help.

Well Chosen Words

Well-chosen words can sometimes avert an escalating crisis. The purpose in communicating with the pupil is to prevent further escalation, support regulation and support their learning.

Staff will assess during incidents whether a pupil would benefit from coregulation through well-chosen words or needs purposeful quiet to calm from a reactive state where there is risk of the child entrenching in argument or defiance.

Staff will also consider their tone, volume and non-verbal communication when supporting a pupil with well-chosen words.

The Last Resort Principle

Within the Federation we only use physical restraint when there is no other realistic alternative. This does not mean staff are expected to methodically work their way through a series of failing strategies before attempting an intervention that will ensure safety. Nor does it mean waiting until the danger is imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing risk may be significantly reduced.

It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a dynamic risk assessment and choose the safest approach for the pupil, their peers and staff. It also means that we expect staff to show professional curiosity and think creatively about possible alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective if used.

“The positive application of force by staff, in order to overcome rigorous resistance; completely directing, deciding and controlling a person’s free movement. The purpose of its application should be to safeguard the person, other people or prevent significant damage to property”

- Team Teach definition of physical restraint



Gradual and Graded Responses

Staff can use a variety of behaviour reduction techniques before the need for a restrictive physical intervention. Prompts, contingent touch and guides may be used as non-restrictive physical interventions to try and de-escalate situations, this can be in the form of:

- Prompts / Contingent touch - A hand placed on the shoulder to offer a positive reinforcement, reassuring touch or unobtrusive personal safety responses to low level risks. This can also be the case whilst sitting next to a pupil who needs support in the form of a help hug. Team Teach training for staff includes the use of prompts and contingent touch.
- Guides - Used to support movement from one space to another when the pupil shows minimal resistance and is ultimately in control of the direction in which they are going. Team Teach training for staff includes the use of guides.

When pupil's behaviour becomes unsafe and dangerous, staff will assess the need for restrictive physical intervention (use of overpowering force). Escorts and restraint are restrictive techniques used to control and limit the pupil's movement whilst dysregulated for their own safety and that of others.

- Escorts – The pupil is supported with controlling force to move safely from one position to another through trained restrictive techniques.
- Restraint – Controlling force is used to maintain safety by limiting the movement of limbs through trained restrictive techniques.

During the use of a guide or of contingent touch, only when the pupil's resistance increases will this then change into an escort or restraint, and ultimately a restrictive physical intervention, as staff will be using overpowering force to direct or limit the pupil's movements to maintain safety.

Reasonable and Proportionate

Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate. When physical intervention is considered, staff should think about the answers to the following questions:

- How is this in the best interests of the pupil?
- Why is a less intrusive intervention not preferable?
- Why do we have to act now?
- Why am I the best person to be doing this?
- Why is this absolutely necessary?

If staff can answer these questions, it is more likely that a physical intervention will be judged to be reasonable and proportionate.

Unreasonable Use of Force

It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. Nor is it reasonable to use any more force than is necessary to achieve a reduction in risk.

Under no circumstances should pain be deliberately inflicted, or should pupils be deliberately subjected to undignified or humiliating treatment (this should not be confused with the unavoidable discomfort associated with some approved techniques for disengaging from assaults such as bites and grabs).

Other than as a one-off emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should never be used to keep a pupil secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and cannot become part of a planned strategy at this school.

Help Protocols

The expectation at this school is that all staff should support each other. This means that staff always offer help and always accept it. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean just staying around in case you are needed, getting somebody else or looking after somebody else's group.

Staff within the Federation are expected to act as critical friends to help colleagues become aware of possible alternative strategies and support professional development. Effective communication is necessary so that colleagues avoid confusion when help is offered and accepted. They need to agree scripts so that all parties understand what sort of assistance is required and what is available.

A 'Help available' or 'More help available' prompt to a staff member is a scripted indication of a need to change face with a different member of staff. This is shared with staff during their Team Teach training.

Physical intervention within the home

Occasionally members of staff attend the home of a pupil who has not accessed transport to/from home with their travel.

Parents/carers will be contacted before the staff set off to support a journey and the potential for physical intervention at home/during the transition in response to unsafe behaviour will be discussed. If parents/ carers do not consent to this, they will be asked to make their own arrangements for this journey.

Where consent is given, parents/carers will also be asked to meet the school car on arrival. On arrival if the child is still in distress parents/carers will be asked if they require assistance.

The Post Incident Support Structure for Pupils and Staff

Following a serious incident, it is the policy of both schools to offer support for all involved. Both headteachers and the six Team Teach trainers within the federation are responsible for this.

Those involved in incidents can take time to recover from a serious incident. Until the incident has subsided the only priority is to reduce risk and calm the situation down.

Following an instance of physical intervention, pupils will be visually checked for any injuries and where appropriate asked if they feel they are injured in any way.

After any Front Ground Recovery (Technique used at Athena) restraint pupils need to be monitored for a period of up to one hour, with visual checks conducted at 5 minutes, 30 minutes, and 60 minutes, looking for any signs of respiratory and / or colour changes, related to positional asphyxia.

Immediate action should be taken to ensure medical help is sought if there are any injuries which require more than basic first aid.

Any injury will be initially checked by the school first aider and in discussion with the Headteacher any necessary decision will be made. All injuries should be reported and recorded using the school systems. It is important to note that injury in itself is not evidence of malpractice. Even when staff attempt to do everything right things can go wrong. Part of the post incident support for staff may involve a reminder of this, as people tend to blame themselves when things go wrong.

“Team-Teach techniques seek to avoid injury to the service user, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen necessarily as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of ensuring that the service user remains safe” (George Matthews – Founder, Team-Teach)

Time must also be found to repair relationships and support understanding for all involved in an incident. With adult support, pupils will have an opportunity to reflect on what happened express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future and be aided in recognising other people’s perspective. A plan for reparation and restoration should be discussed and with the pupil. When time and effort are put into a post incident support structure the outcome of a serious incident can be learning, growth and strengthened relationships, as well as increased future safety.

Recording

When any physical intervention (restrictive and non-restrictive) is used the incident must be recorded using the digital recording system, Behaviour Smart.

This online system is designed to record any physical intervention and support staff reflection, using scaling systems and artificial intelligence driven analytics.

Staff are to fill these out all sections of the online physical intervention forms within 24 hours and parents are to be notified at the end of the day by class teachers or a senior leader.

All staff involved have access to these reports once submitted and can collaborate on Behaviour Smart to add extra detail.

Reporting to Parents/Carers

Class teachers or a senior leader will advise the primary parent/carers at the earliest opportunity (typically after 3pm on the school day the incident occurred on) when restrictive physical intervention is used. This will be by phone, or if there is a parental/carers preference to do so by email. If there is difficulty using these lines of communication, then the school app may also be used to send notification that a physical intervention has occurred.

Communication plans may also require incidents to be reported to a social worker where one is allocated and particularly for pupils in the care of the local authority.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All reports are monitored and actioned on a daily basis by:

Fortuna: Craig Chaplin (SLT) and Claire Senior (Team Teach Trainer).

Athena: Andy Smallcombe (Behaviour Lead) and Chris Mills (SLT).

The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and instigate further action as required. Physical intervention reports are open to external monitoring and evaluation.

Each school will use the Behaviour Smart analytic tools to generate formal termly reports of the use of physical intervention within school to inform school leaders and full Governing Body.

Where there is an exceptionally high or significant change in a pupil's physical intervention data, a senior leader and/or behaviour lead will meet with the classroom staff to discuss the pupil's behaviour management plan with a view to understanding and managing the pupil's presenting behaviour, staff response and the number of physical interventions.

Where appropriate, meetings may also be arranged with parents/carers and involved professionals to better understand patterns of unsafe behaviour and discuss the school response.

For all pupils, at least three times per school year, staff class teams will meet to update their pupil individual behaviour management plans and risk assessments. These will also be updated as and when any new behaviours or risks are identified throughout the school year.

Training

Teachers and anyone authorised by the Headteacher of each school who are expected to use planned physical techniques should be trained. The Fortuna-Athena Federation has adopted the Team Teach model of training. Positive handling training is always provided by qualified instructors within rigorous guidelines.

Each school has their own advanced and intermediate tutors who deliver regular refresher training throughout the year and all staff members are retrained and certified every year.

As the accreditor, Team Teach utilises online system which tracks and records all training, certificate numbers, and expiry dates. This automatically sends out individual emails to staff and organisational admin (Andy Smallcombe & Claire Senior – lead Team Teach tutors) to invite staff to courses, as reminders of expiry dates, as well as updated information on the Team Teach Connect website with news articles and other recourses.

The level of training recommended is related to the level of risk faced by the member of

staff. Our preferred approach is for whole staff team training. Office staff may not require the same level of training in physical techniques as those working directly with the most challenging pupils. However, all staff benefit from whole school training. The level of training required is kept under review and may change in response to the needs of our pupils.

All training courses have been fully accredited by the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM) in accordance with DfES and Department of Health guidance. Positive Handling training is always provided by qualified instructors within rigorous guidelines.

Supporting Staff

Supporting pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs and dealing with incidents of unsafe behaviour can be physically, mentally and emotionally challenging for staff.

Where staff act in good faith, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate they will be supported. As a Federation, we operate an open-door policy to all staff.

Within the Federation the following support structures are in place:

1. Informal de-briefing with team members
2. Discussion with immediate line manager
3. Formal support from Federation Behaviour Leads and Team Teach Instructors.
4. Discussion with Head / Deputy Head
5. Staff supervision with a mental health professional / employee support and counselling service, if required.

Health and Safety

If dangerous behaviour presents a significant risk of injury to people, there is a legal Health and Safety issue to be addressed. Dangerous behaviour should be regarded just as seriously as dangerous equipment. Dangerous occurrences should be reported to the person responsible for Health and Safety in school. We all have shared responsibility to identify risk, communicate potential risks and take active steps to reduce risk wherever possible.

We recognise that it is not possible to entirely remove risk. Sometimes things go wrong even when we make our best efforts to do the right thing. Sometimes we are faced with unpalatable choices. In these circumstances we have to try to think through the outcomes of the options available, balance the risks and choose whatever course of action seems to involve the least risk.

As a minimum requirement, in order to comply with Health and Safety legislation, each employee has a responsibility to ensure that they are conversant with school policy and guidance, and to co-operate to make the school safer. It is also a requirement that they participate in training if they are directed to do so. This does not necessarily mean that all staff can be involved in all the physical activities. The non-physical aspects of positive handling training are crucially important too.

When considering a pupil's behaviour staff should think about the following questions:



- Can we anticipate a Health and Safety risk related to this pupil's behaviour?
- Have we got all the information we need to conduct a risk assessment?
- Have we produced a written plan as a result?
- What further steps can we take to prevent dangerous behaviour from developing?

Any safety concerns should be reported to the designated person for Health and Safety.

Fortuna: Nikki Hagues

Athena: Andy Smallcombe

Organisational Learning

Following an incident consideration may be given to revising risk assessments and reviewing the pupil's Behaviour Management Plan, as well as the Federation's Behaviour Management Policy or this Positive Handling Policy.

Any further action in relation to a member of staff, or an individual pupil, will follow the appropriate procedures.

Complaints and Whistleblowing

It is possible for pupils to make allegations of inappropriate or excessive use of force following an incident. The school has a formal complaints procedure. Pupils should be reminded of this procedure and encouraged to use the appropriate channels.

The complaints policy applies equally to parents, and staff. Both schools promote transparent policy and practice in order to protect the interests of pupils and staff alike.

Any staff concerns regarding the welfare of children should be taken to the designated person for child protection. Staff are expected to be aware of and follow the federation's Whistleblowing Policy as and when appropriate.

Key Terms

Physical Intervention – The broad term for physical action with the purpose of influencing, modifying, or preventing the actions of another person, such as guiding, holding, or restraining them.

Restictive Physical Intervention - The positive application of force by another in order to overcome rigorous resistance; completely directing, deciding and controlling a person's free movement. The purpose of its application should be to safeguard the person, other people or prevent significant damage to property.

Dynamic Risk Assessment – when people have to think on their feet, in the heat of the movement, and balance risks as best they can.

Prompts / Contingent Touch - a hand placed on the shoulder to offer a positive reinforcement, reassuring touch or unobtrusive personal safety responses to low level risks.

Guides – the positive application of reasonable force to overcome minimal resistance prompting and encouraging a person's free movement.

Escort / Controls – the positive application of reasonable force to overcome moderate



resistance, guiding and directing a person's movement.

Restraint – the application of force to overcome rigorous resistance; completely directing, deciding and controlling a person's free movement in order to keep people safe.

Policy Statement

Staff within the Fortuna-Athena Federation are trained to look after pupils in their care. Staff have a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others. There may also be situations in which a child seriously disrupts good order in the school or causes damage to property. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically, they will follow the school's positive handling policy. Any parents/carers wishing to view this policy may do so on request.

Other Relevant Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Behaviour Management Policy

Exclusion Policy

Code of Conduct Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Child Protection Policy



Effective date of this policy:	October 2025
Person responsible for this policy:	Craig Chaplin
Accredited training model in use:	Team Teach
Person responsible for Health and Safety:	Nikki Brown
Designated Child Protection Lead:	Hannah Keegan
Date of next policy review:	October 2026
Location of bound incident books:	Behaviour Smart Online



Effective date of this policy:	October 2025
Person responsible for this policy:	Andy Smallcombe
Accredited training model in use:	Team Teach
Person responsible for Health and Safety:	Andy Smallcombe
Person responsible for Child Protection:	Michelle Bunn
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