

ELC International Schools

Safe and/or Positive Handling Policy

ELC INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS
BANGKOK



the city school



the purple elephant



the dove center

Vision Statement

Cultivating creativity, valuing difference, empowering minds, striving to build a global community.

Mission Statements

Enriching minds through purposeful reflection, critical thinking and creativity.

Learning to wonder, inquire and question through projects, expressive languages and engaging academics.

Celebrating individuality, culture and diversity through the image of the child.

Objectives

Staff should recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the last in a range of strategies available to secure student safety and wellbeing.

Specific objectives of the safe and/or positive handling policy:

1. To protect every person in the school community from harm
2. To protect all students against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
3. To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potential violent situations

Alternative strategies

There are some situations in which the need for safe and/or positive handling is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives - such as a student attempting to run across a road. However, in many circumstances there are alternatives and these should be used in all cases where there is not an immediate potential for harm, such as:

- Repetitive clear instruction up to three times - direct, clear and firm e.g. hands down, hands to yourself
- The use of a distractor to defuse the situation
- Responsive Classroom strategies

Reasonable control and force¹

Educators and staff may use reasonable force to control or restrain children in exceptional circumstances for the safety of the child or others. Reasonable means no more force than is needed. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between children or blocking a child's path, or active physical contact such as leading a child by the arm out of a classroom. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a child under control. It should only be used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two children are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. Educators and staff may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a child from:

- threatening violence with an implement
- attacking a member of staff or another child
- fighting
- causing or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, using dangerous materials, substances or objects to self or others
- running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which they might have or cause an accident likely to injure themselves or others
- absconding from a class or trying to leave school

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>

- persistently refusing to follow an order to leave an area
- behaving in such a way that seriously disrupts a lesson

Safe and/or positive handling

Under no circumstances can staff use force as a punishment. Safe and/or positive handling is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming themselves or others or from seriously damaging property. Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled children and children with additional rights.

When to use safe and/or positive handling

Safe and / or positive handling should be used to avoid foreseeable accidents and/or avert danger by preventing or deflecting a student's action or by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm her / himself or others. It is only likely to be enforced if a student has the inability to exercise self-control regarding emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which safe and / or positive handling would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the schools policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour. Staff are aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in *loco parentis* and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure students' safety and wellbeing. Failure to safely or positively handle a student who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time, staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their interventions.

Use of safe and/or positive handling

Safe and / or positive handling should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the student to regain self-control. It should never be seen as a punishment.

There is no absolute definition to reasonable force when applying safe and / or positive, as reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the student to whom it is being applied. However, as a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below. There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a student's path or the staff member physically interposing her/himself between the student and another student or object. However in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

Physical contact with children

Touching children may be proper or necessary as follows:

- Holding the hand of a child when walking together around the school
- Comforting a distressed child
- When demonstrating how to use a musical instrument
- When demonstrating exercises in PE
- To give first aid

Applied as an act of care and control

DO

Tell the student what you are doing and why in a brief and direct way, e.g. I will pick you up now

- Use the minimum amount of control or force necessary
- Pick up under arms & support bottom (note that joints dislocate easily)
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Restrain, from behind crossed arms
- If a child bites, release the hold a little, state "no biting, it hurts", continue the hold - letting go altogether will reward the biting behaviour
- Relax restraint as soon as the child is calm

DON'T

- Act in temper or when you are dysregulated
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the student
- Attempt to reason with the student
- Involve other students in the restraint
- Touch or hold the student in a sexual area
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Hold the child by the wrist or pull arms or legs or lift the child by the arms
- Hold a student in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing

Biting²³

DO

- Observe the child to learn where, when, and in what situations biting occurs. Sometimes an adult may need to stay close to the child to prevent biting.
- Pay attention to signals. Stay close and step in if the child seems ready to bite.
- Suggest acceptable ways to express strong feelings. Help the child learn to communicate their wants and needs ("Amy, tell your friend you were still playing with the truck").
- Use a reminder system to help the child learn to express strong feelings with appropriate words and actions ("Tell Manuel that you don't like it when he gets that close to you").
- Reinforce positive behaviour by acknowledging the child's appropriate words and actions ("You didn't like being tickled so you used your words to say stop").
- Provide opportunities for the child to make choices and feel empowered.
- Be sure your behaviour expectations are age-appropriate and individually appropriate for the child. Expecting a child to do something he or she is not able to do can cause children to feel stress. Stress can lead to biting.
- Offer foods with a variety of textures to meet the child's sensory needs.
- Teach the child words for setting limits, such as "no," "stop," or "that's mine."
- Remove environmental factors⁴ which may cause children to bite, such as:

² <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/understanding-and-responding-children-who-bite>

³ <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/02/biting>

⁴ https://www.childdaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2017/05/When-Children-Bite.pdf

- Congestion in any one area – too many children in too small a space
- Competition for toys (or for a favourite toy)
- Over-stimulation (too much colour, noise, activity)
- Limited or no quiet areas
- Boredom
- Stress

DON'T

- Do not label a child as a “biter.” Negative labels can affect how you view your child, and even affect the child’s feelings about themselves
- Never bite a child back to punish or show him how it feels to be bitten. Biting a child sends the message that using violence is an acceptable behaviour that can be used to solve problems.
- Avoid getting angry, yelling, or shaming a child.
- Avoid giving too much attention to a child who bites after an incident. While this is usually negative attention, it can still reinforce the behaviour and cause a child to repeat it.
- Do not force a child who bit and the child who was hurt to play together.
- Do not punish children who bite. Punishment does not help children to learn discipline and self-control. Instead, it makes children angry, upset, defiant, and embarrassed. It also undermines the relationship between you and your child.

Actions after an incident

Safe and / or positive handling often occurs in response to highly emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the student. A member of the Admin team, Safeguarding Liaison and / or Head of school, should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the student involved and any casualties of the incident should be offered support. Parents should always be informed in the first instance.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a behavioural ISP, which can include anger management and / or other strategies as defined by Safeguarding Liaisons and / or school counsellor. It would be extremely helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided; which would be in collaboration with the identified team and parents.

All incidents should be recorded immediately in the Action Plan.

Risk assessments and action plans

If we are aware that the student is likely to behave in a disruptive manner that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises, where such planning will involve the following:

- Assess potential risks to child and others through observation records

- Form a case team for intervention which includes the classroom teacher, IE, TA, Academic Coordinator, Student Services and Well-being Coordinator
- Case Team develops an Action Plan and communicates this with all other staff members who work with the child
- The Action Plan is to include: Management of the student – reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict; holds to be used if necessary; proactive strategies to set an environment which lessens the likelihood of acts of harm to self and others
- As the Case Team, discuss how to strengthen children's sense of security in the environment. Maintain awareness of each child's reactions when tired, hungry or excited. Maintain a consistent routine that minimises surprises for children. Adjust routines as necessary to meet children's needs so that they eat and nap when they are beginning to get hungry or tired. Keep staffing as consistent as possible. Make time to interact with all children on a one to one basis.
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might wish to take
- Briefing staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking
- Identification of additional support if appropriate
- Debrief and review when acts of harm to self or others occur

Complaints

Staff have a duty of care to provide a safe environment for all. If the force used is reasonable all staff will have a robust defence against any complaints from parents. Reasonable force is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. The degree of force should be no more than that which is necessary to prevent harm to oneself or others. The force should be stopped as soon as it is safe to do so. The incident must be documented and debriefed with the Academic Coordinator for that year level and the Student Services and Well-being Coordinator. Complaints must be referred to the Admin Team.