Positive Handling Policy

1. Policy Statement

The Orchard Nursery is committed to providing a safe, nurturing and respectful environment where all children feel secure and valued. We believe that positive relationships, consistent routines and appropriate support help children develop self-regulation, independence and positive behaviour.

Physical intervention is always a last resort and will only be used when it is necessary to prevent harm to a child or others. Staff will always act in the best interests of the child, using the least restrictive intervention necessary and in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

---

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote positive behaviour through praise, encouragement and consistent boundaries.
- Support children to recognise and regulate their emotions.
- Prevent situations from escalating wherever possible.
- Ensure children, staff and visitors remain safe.
- Ensure physical contact is appropriate, respectful and necessary.
- Ensure any physical intervention is reasonable, proportionate and recorded appropriately.

---

3. Preventing Incidents

Staff will seek to prevent situations escalating by:

- Building secure, trusting relationships with children.
- Understanding children's individual needs, routines and communication styles.
- Identifying possible triggers for distressed or challenging behaviour.
- Using distraction, reassurance and redirection.
- Offering choices where appropriate.
- Providing calm spaces and emotional regulation support.
- Supporting communication through age-appropriate language, visual prompts or signing.
- Working closely with parents/carers and other professionals to ensure consistent approaches.

---

4. Positive Handling and Appropriate Physical Contact

Positive handling includes the supportive physical contact that forms part of everyday care, education and safeguarding.

Appropriate physical contact may include:

- Holding a child's hand when walking.
- Comforting or reassuring a distressed child where appropriate.
- Assisting with dressing, toileting or personal care.
- Guiding a child away from danger using appropriate physical guidance.
- Supporting children during emergency evacuations.
- Providing physical support to promote children's independence.

Physical contact should always be:

- Appropriate to the child's age, stage of development and individual needs.
- Respectful and sensitive.
- In the child's best interests.
- Used to maintain safety, provide care or offer reassurance.

---

5. Safe Manual /Positive Handling of Children

At The Orchard Nursery, staff recognise that children are not objects and move unpredictably. Staff must consider children's movements, responses and individual needs when providing physical support.

Staff must follow safe positive handling practices, including:

- Children move unpredictably, unlike objects, and staff must respond safely to their movements.
- Use appropriate manual handling techniques when lifting or supporting children.
- Stop if a child becomes distressed, struggles or resists. Reassure the child and only continue when it is safe and appropriate.
- Encourage children to assist with their own mobility and independence wherever possible.
- Always hold children close to the body when lifting or supporting them.
- Never lift children by their arms, wrists or hands, or hold them at arm's length.
- Children, where appropriate should use the steps on the nappy changing unit wherever appropriate and safe, with adult supervision.
- Individual handling plans must be created for children requiring additional physical support.
- All handling must be carried out safely, sensitively and respectfully, preserving the child's dignity at all times.

Staff Training and Responsibilities

- Staff receive guidance on safe handling practices during induction and through ongoing refresher training where required.
- Staff must follow agreed procedures and seek advice if they are unsure how to safely support a child.
- Failure to follow safe handling procedures may place children at risk and may result in disciplinary action.

---

6. Positive Handling – Graduated Response

When a child is refusing to follow instructions, staff should always use the least intrusive approach first. The aim is to support the child to regulate their emotions and make safe choices.

Step 1 – Stay Calm and Connect

- Remain calm and speak in a gentle, reassuring voice.
- Move to the child's level where appropriate.
- Acknowledge the child's feelings (e.g. "I can see you're feeling upset.").
- Give clear, simple instructions using age-appropriate language.

Step 2 – Encourage Positive Choices

- Remind the child of the expected behaviour.
- Offer simple choices where appropriate (e.g. "Would you like to walk or hold my hand?").

- Praise and reinforce positive behaviour shown by other children.
- Continue to encourage the child without confrontation.

Step 3 – Guide to a Safe Place

If the child remains distressed or is becoming unsafe:

- Encourage the child to move to a quieter, safer space.
- If appropriate and accepted by the child, offer your hand and encourage them to walk with you.
- Continue to speak calmly and reassure the child.

Step 4 – Prevent Harm

If there is an immediate risk that the child may hurt themselves or others, staff may use body blocking as a preventative strategy.

Body blocking involves positioning yourself as a barrier to:

- Prevent access to unsafe areas.
- Prevent a child running into danger.
- Protect other children or adults from injury.
- Create a safe physical boundary without unnecessary force.

When using body blocking:

- Remain calm and continue communicating with the child.
- Use open body positioning rather than confrontation.

Body blocking must never be used as punishment or simply because a child refuses an instruction.

Step 5 – Continue to De-escalate

Staff should:

- Reassure the child.
- Discuss alternative, safer behaviours.
- Offer calming strategies such as breathing together, sensory resources or a quiet area.
- Help the child understand what happened once calm.
- Praise the child for regaining control and making positive choices.

Step 6 – Restrictive Physical Intervention (Last Resort)

Restrictive physical intervention will only be used where there is an immediate risk of harm and other strategies have been unsuccessful.

Any intervention must:

- Be reasonable, necessary and proportionate.
- Use the minimum force required.
- Last only for as long as the risk remains.
- Respect the child's dignity.
- Never deliberately cause pain, fear or humiliation.
- Never be used as punishment or to gain compliance.

---

7. Inappropriate Handling of Children

The following practices are **not acceptable** at The Orchard Nursery and must never be used:

- Using physical intervention as a punishment.
- Using force to make a child comply with an instruction when there is no immediate risk of harm.
- Lifting or carrying a child in a way that causes distress or discomfort, unless required to prevent immediate harm.
- Pulling a child by the arm, wrist, hand, clothing or hood.
- Grabbing a child forcefully or roughly.
- Twisting limbs or forcing a child into a position.
- Lifting a child over a fence.
- Lifting a child up by the wrists or hands.
- Using physical intervention because a child is refusing to follow instructions, crying, shouting or having a tantrum where there is no risk of harm.
- Intimidating, threatening or using aggressive body language.
- Deliberately humiliating, ridiculing or frightening a child.
- Using more force than is reasonable or for longer than is necessary.
- Continuing to physically intervene once the risk has passed.
- Using restrictive physical intervention without attempting appropriate de-escalation strategies first, unless immediate action is required to prevent serious harm.

Good Practice Reminder

Staff should always:

- Use the least restrictive intervention possible.
- Prioritise communication, reassurance and de-escalation.
- Preserve the child's dignity and emotional wellbeing.
- Act in the child's best interests.
- Record and report any restrictive physical intervention.
- Seek support from the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead following any significant incident.

---

8. Following an Incident

Following any significant incident or physical intervention:

- Check that everyone involved is safe.
- Offer comfort and reassurance to the child.
- Check for injuries and provide first aid where required.
- Inform the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Record the incident in line with nursery procedures.
- Inform parents/carers where physical intervention has been required or where the incident is significant.
- Review the incident, triggers and support strategies.
- Update risk assessments or behaviour support plans where required.

---

9. Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor positive handling incidents to ensure:

- Practice remains safe and appropriate.
- Interventions are necessary and proportionate.
- Patterns or triggers are identified.
- Children receive appropriate support.

This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Health and Safety Policy, manual handling and EYFS Statutory Framework.

Signed on behalf of the nursery.....*Emma Middleton*.....Date:… August 2026