



Brentford School for Girls

Manual Handling Policy and Physical Contact guidelines for Physical Education (PE)

<i>Rev</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	September 2024	Initial Version

1. Introduction

This policy provides clear guidelines and procedures for safe manual handling in the context of Physical Education (PE) activities, including the handling of sports equipment, setting up or dismantling sports facilities, and interacting with students during physical activities. It also covers appropriate physical contact during training or teaching to ensure safety, comfort, and respect for personal boundaries.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the health and safety of staff and students during PE activities.
- Promote safe lifting, carrying, and handling techniques for sports equipment.
- Provide clear guidelines for appropriate physical contact during PE lessons or extracurricular activities.
- Comply with relevant health and safety legislation, including safeguarding and welfare standards.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all school staff, including PE teachers, teaching assistants, sports coaches, and any other personnel involved in handling sports equipment, setting up facilities, or assisting students. It also applies to students during supervised PE lessons or extracurricular activities.

4. Definitions

- **Manual handling:** The transporting or supporting of a load (e.g., sports equipment) by physical effort, including lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, or lowering.
- **Physical contact:** Physical contact between staff and students, which may occur during activities such as correcting posture, guiding through a technique, or providing support during exercises or sports.
- **Risk assessment:** A process used to identify potential hazards, assess the risks involved, and implement measures to control them.

5. General Manual Handling Guidelines

- **Avoid manual handling where possible:** Whenever feasible, use mechanical aids to move heavy items. If manual handling is required, ensure that equipment is stored at a suitable height to minimise bending, reaching, or lifting.
- **Use correct lifting techniques:** When manual handling is unavoidable, staff should adopt proper lifting techniques: bend the knees, not the back; keep the load close to the body; and avoid twisting or jerking movements.
- **Team lifting:** For heavier or awkward items, such as large gym mats or sports apparatus, always use a team lifting approach. Ensure everyone involved is clear on their roles, communicates effectively, and works together.
- **Use mechanical aids:** For larger or heavier equipment, such as goalposts, trampolines, or large apparatus, use mechanical aids or the assistance of others to move and set up.

6. Physical Contact Guidelines

a) Contact for Instruction and Safety

Physical contact may be necessary in PE lessons for safety and instructional purposes. This should be conducted with the utmost respect for personal space and boundaries. The following guidelines apply:

- **Correcting posture or technique:** When a student is learning a new skill or technique, physical contact may be required to correct posture or positioning. This should always be done with clear verbal explanation beforehand, ensuring the student is aware of why the contact is necessary.
 - For example, when teaching gymnastics or certain types of dance, a teacher may need to adjust a student's alignment to prevent injury.
 - To teach gymnastics supporting techniques so that all students are taught the correct way to support each other to prevent injury through skills like headstands and handstands.
 - Always ask for the student's consent before engaging in physical contact, even if it is for instructional purposes.
- **Providing Support or Stability:** In some activities, such as balance exercises or team sports, staff may need to offer physical support to students to ensure their safety, such as holding their waist during a gymnastics/trampolining move or providing stability.
 - Again, staff should ensure the contact is brief, purposeful, and in the context of promoting safety or teaching proper technique.
- **Consent:** Always seek verbal consent from the student before initiating any form of physical contact ensuring the student feels comfortable.

b) Boundaries and Respect

- **Personal space:** Always respect students' personal space. Avoid physical contact with a student unless necessary for safety or instructional purposes. If a student appears uncomfortable with physical contact, respect their wishes and seek alternative methods to support them.
- **Clear communication:** Before engaging in physical contact with a student, staff should explain the purpose of the physical contact and allow the student to express their preferences. If a student is uncomfortable, they should feel empowered to communicate this, and the staff member should immediately respect their boundaries.
- **Professionalism:** Any physical contact must always be professional, appropriate, and non-invasive. It is crucial that physical contact does not cross boundaries of personal comfort or appear overly familiar.

c) Special Considerations

- **Vulnerable students:** When working with students with additional needs, physical contact may be more frequent or necessary for guidance and support. However, extra care should be taken to ensure that contact is appropriate, respectful, and explained clearly. Where necessary, involve a support staff member or guardian in decisions around physical contact.
- **Students with religious or cultural sensitivities:** Be aware of individual students' cultural or religious beliefs regarding physical contact. If a student expresses concerns or preferences about contact due to cultural reasons, these should be respected, and alternative methods of guidance should be employed.

For activities requiring physical contact, assess the context and ensure that appropriate measures are in place to maintain the comfort and safety of students.

7. Specific Manual Handling Procedures for Various Sports

a) Gymnastics Equipment

- Lifting mats and apparatus: Use team lifting or mechanical aids when handling large or heavy gym mats. Ensure mats are securely placed and aligned.
- Physical contact in gymnastics: contact may be required for supporting balance or positioning during exercises. Always ensure students are informed and comfortable with this.
- Physical contact in trampolining: Contact may be required for supporting somersaults in the first instance or as a spotter for safety to prevent injury of any student potentially falling from the trampoline.

b) Ball Sports

- Handling balls: Balls should be stored in containers that are easy to carry. Avoid overloading bags to reduce strain.
- Goalposts and equipment: For goalposts or heavy equipment, use mechanical aids or team lifting. Ensure safe storage and handling procedures.
- Physical contact in sports: Use physical contact to guide posture or technique where necessary, ensuring it is brief, respectful, and with the student's consent.

c) Athletics and Outdoor Sports

- Handling heavy equipment: For throwing implements (e.g., shot put, discus), use proper lifting techniques. Store equipment in safe, easily accessible locations.
- Physical contact in athletics: Assistance may be needed for safety or technique. Always ask for consent before physical interaction.

9. Training and Competency

- Staff training: All staff involved in manual handling tasks and physical contact should receive appropriate training in safe lifting techniques, safeguarding, and understanding student comfort levels.
- Student education: Students should be educated on the importance of safe manual handling and informed of the process of consent and personal boundaries around physical contact.

10. Emergency Procedures

In the event of an injury related to manual handling or physical contact, staff should:

1. Seek immediate medical attention: Provide first aid or medical care immediately.
2. Report the incident: Follow the school's incident reporting procedures.
3. Review the incident: Investigate any incidents to understand if proper procedures were followed and to prevent future occurrences.

11. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Any changes will be communicated to all staff, and further training will be provided as necessary.