



POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

Introduction

The policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils and for volunteers working within the Trust, to explain the arrangements for the care and control of pupils presenting very challenging behaviour.

It also sets out the Trust's approach to the use of *restrictive interventions* (including reasonable force and seclusion), emphasising prevention, de-escalation and lawful, proportionate practice when such interventions are necessary.

Purpose of the policy

Good personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in our Trust. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in our academies respond positively to the discipline and control practised by staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff in Aspire North East Multi Academy Trust. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in the Trust clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care for taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary.

This policy aims to *minimise the need* to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation, and to ensure that where such interventions are used, they are safe, appropriate, lawful and properly recorded and reported.

Implications of the policy

In line with DfE guidance, the Education and Inspection Act 2006 stipulates that reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- committing any offence
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself)
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the academy or among any pupils receiving education at the academy, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Individual members of staff cannot be required to use physical restraint. However, teaching and non-teaching staff work in loco parentis and should always operate with an appropriate 'Duty of Care'.

The application of any form of physical control places staff in a vulnerable situation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention.

Reasonable force will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when pupils, staff or property are at risk.

The Trust recognises the new *statutory duties* to record and report each **significant incident** involving the use of force (Education and Inspections Act 2006, s.93A) and to record and report each incident of **seclusion** and **restraint** (including restraint without physical contact) under the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, effective April 2026.

Definitions

Restrictive intervention: any means to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of all or part of a pupil's body (umbrella term including physical and non-physical restraint and seclusion).

Reasonable force: a legal term covering physical restrictive interventions — no more force than necessary and for the least time required, proportionate to the risk and circumstances.

Seclusion: a *non-disciplinary* intervention confining a pupil to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving (by blocking/obstruction or threat of punishment). Used only as a safety measure when a pupil is highly dysregulated and poses risk to others; must be supervised, brief, and recorded/reported.

Significant incident: any incident where use of force goes beyond appropriate everyday physical contact (as defined in the guidance) and therefore triggers statutory recording and reporting to parents.

The scale and nature of any intervention must be proportionate to the behaviour and the risk of harm. Staff must consider the pupil's needs, age, size, medical conditions, SEND and other vulnerabilities.

Physical contact - it is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- when comforting a distressed pupil;
- when a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- to give first aid.

The Trust does **not** operate a 'no contact' policy. Schools should not adopt 'no contact', and staff should not agree to parent requests for 'no contact', because this could prevent necessary protective interventions. Sensible, appropriate contact is supported.

Physical intervention (including guiding/escorting with minimal force) may be used where necessary and proportionate to prevent injury, crime, serious damage, or serious disorder. Staff should use the least restrictive option for the shortest time, and stop or change approach if the intervention escalates risk.

Unacceptable uses of force include any restraint that compromises breathing or circulation (e.g., pressure on neck/torso, covering mouth/nose) or prolonged ground holds. If a pupil ends up on the ground unintentionally, staff must release/re-position to a safer alternative quickly.

Where appropriate after an incident, a prompt medical assessment should be sought for pupils and staff.

Physical intervention, control and restraint should always be the last resort, will always consider the rights and needs of the pupil first and will only be used in the best interests of the pupil. Staff should not physically intervene or act in any way that may exacerbate the situation. Pupils will always be encouraged to regain control of their own actions in an attempt to de-escalate the situation without the need of physical intervention. If it is necessary to use physical intervention, at no time during physical intervention will pain be intentionally inflicted.

Underpinning values

Everyone attending or working in this Trust has a right to:

- recognition of their unique identity;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- learn and work in a safe environment;
- be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

Pupils attending academies within this Trust and their parents have a right to:

- individual consideration of pupil needs by the staff who have responsibility for their care and protection;
- expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the Trust's policies;
- be informed about Trust rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in the Trust;
- be informed about the Trust's complaints procedure.

The Trust will ensure that pupils are given support to understand the need for and respond to clearly defined limits, which govern behaviour in the academies.

The Trust will take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantaging pupils with disabilities and will make reasonable adjustments and personalised plans where required under the Equality Act 2010.

Authorised staff

All staff employed within the Aspire North East Multi Academy Trust are authorised to use reasonable force within the context of The Education and Inspection Act 2006, S93 – 'Use of reasonable force'.

This power also applies to people whom the Headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils, such as unpaid volunteers, staff from external organisations working within the academies, initial teacher training students or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit. For such parties, it is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure that colleagues from support services are aware of Trust policy and practice.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should receive appropriate training aligned to this guidance, and risk assessments should be in place to protect staff and pupils as far as reasonably practicable.

Use of reasonable force in searches

The Headteacher and authorised staff may use reasonable force when searching for *prohibited items* where they have reasonable grounds to suspect possession, but not for items banned only under school rules. Staff should follow DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.

Guidelines & Training

The contents of this policy and associated procedures will be made clear as part of the induction of staff and training when considered appropriate will be provided as part of on-going staff development.

Aspire North East Academy Trust acknowledges that physical techniques are only a part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management. The Directors of the Trust will ensure that:

- the Behaviour Policy is reviewed on a two-year cycle at least;
- training will be planned and delivered through a programme of CPD for all staff on a needs-based approach and procedures are in place to monitor incidents, following a behavioural audit and implementation of appropriate risk management procedures;
- Training may include theory on the following:
 - causes of challenging behaviour;
 - prevention strategies;
 - positive behaviour management;
 - de-escalation;
 - risk assessment;
 - behaviour support planning;
 - de-briefing following incidents.
- Physical techniques are not treated in isolation and the Trust is committed to ensuring that, as a result of incidents, learning opportunities are created for children that allow them to 'own' and take responsibility for their behaviour.

Training requirements: staff most likely to use restrictive interventions **should be trained** in lawful, safe use of interventions, prevention and de-escalation, decision-making under pressure, equality implications, and incident recording/reporting.

Prevention emphasis: whole-school measures (e.g., environment, routines, communication approaches, relationships) and pupil-specific strategies to *reduce the need* for restrictive interventions must be planned and reviewed using incident data.

Conclusion

Procedures are to be in place to ensure that appropriate support is provided for staff and that following an incident pupil/staff relationships are rebuilt and repaired to ensure that a positive learning environment is maintained.

All the techniques used take account of a young person's:

- age
- gender
- level of physical, emotional and intellectual development
- special needs and/or disabilities

Where appropriate, Positive Handling Plans are written for individual children and, when appropriate, these will be designed through multi-professional collaboration. These should be included in any Pastoral Support Plans/IEPs.

Risk assessments need to be completed against each child when it is anticipated that physical restraint may need to be used, in the context of identified target behaviour(s) and environments in which they occur. The assessment should identify the benefits and the risks associated with the strategies being proposed.

Positive handling and incident reports are completed and recorded following any use of restraint.

All parties involved in carrying out a restraint, including the pupil/s involved are assessed by a trained first aider, at the earliest available opportunity, the details of which are formally recorded.

Parents/carers are made aware of any incidents requiring the use of restraints involving their child.

Situations requiring a child to be restrained that escalate to what is deemed to be a serious level may result in requiring assistance from the police.

For pupils with SEND, the school will co-produce behaviour support plans with parents/pupils and relevant professionals, identify triggers (e.g., sensory overload, pain, anxiety), and review plans after incidents. Reasonable adjustments will be made so pupils can participate fully and safely.

Post-incident support and debrief: as soon as practicable, the school will (i) evaluate the incident to understand causes and reduce recurrence; (ii) ensure medical assessment/treatment where needed; (iii) hold a restorative follow-up conversation(s) to reflect, repair and learn, ideally facilitated by a staff member **not involved** in the incident, with support for any pupil witnesses as appropriate.**

Seclusion

Seclusion may only be used as a *safety* measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is highly dysregulated and not acting with intent. It must never be used as punishment or under threat of punishment. The space must be safe, supervised at all times, and pupils must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk reduces. All incidents of seclusion must be recorded and reported in line with statutory duties (see below).

Recording and Reporting Duties

A. Significant use of force (statutory – s.93A EIA 2006):

- Record each significant incident as soon as practicable (ideally same day) with, at minimum: names of pupil/staff; pupil needs/SEND status; time/date/location/duration; brief account incl. triggers and

de-escalation; type/degree of force; injuries; post-incident support. Recording is required even if force is agreed in a plan.

- Report to parents as soon as practicable (ideally same day) including: time/date/location/duration; reason; type/degree of force; injuries. Exceptions only where reporting would likely cause *serious harm*; in such cases report to any parent where safe, or the local authority if none. Use written communication (e.g., email/MIS).

B. Seclusion and restraint without physical contact (statutory – 2025 Regulations):

- Record each incident (same-day where practicable) including: names; time/date/location/duration; pupil needs/SEND status; reason; injuries; post-incident support. Recording applies even if part of an agreed plan.
- Report to parents as soon as practicable (ideally same day). LA-maintained schools must supply a copy of the written record; independent/academy schools must provide written information. Same serious harm exception applies.
- If a restraint incident is also a significant use of force, follow the use of force reporting route and do not duplicate reporting.

Governance and Data

Governing bodies must ensure compliant procedures and *regularly review data* on restrictive interventions to: identify improvements; target staff development; understand pupil triggers; and check for any disproportionate use (e.g., by SEND or protected characteristic). Analysis should be proportionate and mindful of small numbers.

Last review date: 01.04.26

Next review due: Spring 2027

Person Responsible: Deputy Head: Pastoral

Associated Policies: Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Risk Management
Safer Working Practices
Equal Opportunities
Special Education & Inclusion Policy
Suspension and Permanent Exclusion
Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Statutory guidance on Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (DfE, April 2026) can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943dad6501cdd438f4cf5aa/Restrictive_interventions_including_use_of_reasonable_force_in_schools.pdf

Education and Inspections Act 2006 Section 93 - Power of members of staff to use force:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/93>