



The right support, at the right time

Positive Handling Policy

Author	Mrs Samantha Webster
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to make clear Leading Futures Alternative Provision's position regarding necessary physical interventions, safeguarding the well-being of learners and staff when a situation or incident requires the use of physical intervention.

It is the objective of the provision to maintain consistent and safe practices in the use of handling, reasonable force and restraint.

Relevant Legislation

The use of all forms of physical intervention and physical contact are governed by the criminal and civil law. The unwarranted or inappropriate use of force may constitute an assault. In addition, it may infringe the human rights of a child or young person.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use reasonable force to prevent a learner from:

- committing a criminal offence
- causing personal injury or damage to a property
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among the learners, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

As included in the DFE 2010 guidance on 'The use of force to control or restrain pupils', seclusion should only be considered in exceptional circumstances, and it is an offence to lock a person in a room without a court order. Therefore, at no time should the door be locked as to do so is unlawful and can amount to the false imprisonment of a learner.

Government Advice Informing This Policy

Use of Reasonable Force: Advice for Head teachers, staff and governing bodies (July 2013)

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions, used by most teachers at some point in their career, that involve a degree of physical contact with learners.
- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a learner to safety by the arm, through to more extreme circumstances where a learner needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- 'Control' means either passive physical contact, such as standing between learners or blocking a learner's path, or active physical contact such as leading a learner by the arm out of a classroom.
- 'Restraint' means to hold back physically or to bring a learner under control. It is the positive application of force to actively prevent a child from causing significant injury to him/ herself or others or seriously damaging property. Significant Injury would include actual or grievous bodily harm, physical or sexual abuse, risking the lives of, or injury to, themselves or others by wilful or reckless behaviour, and self-poisoning.
- Provision staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the learner.
- It must be shown that on any occasion where physical restraint is used there were strong indicators that if immediate action had not been taken, significant injury would have followed.

Additional Relevant Definitions

- ‘Handling’ refers to any physical intervention applied by a member of staff where it necessary to make physical contact with a learner to manage their conduct or ensure their own or others safety. Handling strategies may be restrictive or non-restrictive and include shepherding, guiding, supporting, blocking, confining, holding and, in the most extreme cases, restraining.

Who Can Use Reasonable Force?

All members of staff working with learners at the provision are authorised to handle, use reasonable force or restrain learners if/ when such physical intervention is necessary.

No member of staff is required to employ any physical intervention strategy if they are not comfortable or confident to do so effectively.

No member of staff should intervene physically if they have reason to believe that to do so would worsen the situation/ incident that is taking place.

In all circumstances where physical intervention is or may become required, members of staff should ensure that adult assistance is requested before intervention, although it is understood that circumstances may lead to the need for intervention prior to the assistance arriving.

Staff considering handling, use of reasonable force or restraint must provide opportunity for the learner to alter their behaviour/ actions before employing a physical intervention strategy and should continue to make instructions to the learner and details of their intended interventions clear.

The method of physical intervention employed must use the minimum reasonable force for the minimum length of time.

When Can Reasonable Force Be Used?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent learners from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In an educational establishment, force is used for two main purposes – to control learners or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. (Section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

Educational Provisions Can Use Reasonable Force to:

- remove disruptive learners from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.
- prevent a learner behaving in a way that disrupts a provision event or visit.
- prevent a learner leaving the classroom, where allowing the learner to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others.
- prevent a learner from attacking a member of staff or another learner.
- restrain a learner at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

- stop a learner behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson, causing distress to the learners and/ or a breakdown of order.

Physical intervention cannot use force as a punishment – it is unlawful.

Educational provisions do not require parental consent to use force on a learner.

Staff Training

To ensure staff are equipped to manage challenging situations safely and effectively, the provision prioritises ongoing training in positive handling and physical intervention. However, it is important to note, regardless of the level of training received, staff can physically intervene in a situation, providing they are acting in accordance with the legal framework and the guidance set out within this policy.

New staff will undergo training as part of their induction, ensuring they understand policy guidelines, best practices, and safe intervention techniques from the outset (See Appendix A).

All staff will receive annual Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) training to maintain proficiency in de-escalation techniques and safe intervention strategies.

In addition to formal training, staff will participate in regular policy refreshers, reinforcing key principles and addressing any updates in procedures. These sessions support staff in maintaining confidence and competence in handling situations appropriately, while fostering a culture of safety and respect.

Scenario-based practice will be incorporated into training sessions, allowing staff to engage in role-playing exercises to refine their skills in a controlled environment. This approach helps reinforce learning and prepares staff for real-world situations.

The effectiveness of training will be ensured through monitoring and evaluation, with staff progress assessed regularly. Feedback from training sessions and real-life experiences will be gathered to inform future improvements and adaptations to the training programme.

Before Using Physical Interventions

Staff at the provision take effective action to de-escalate and reduce risk by:

- Showing care, concern and support appropriate for the learner.
- Removing an audience or taking vulnerable students to a safe place.
- Making the environment safer if required.
- Using positive guidance to escort students to somewhere less pressured.
- Ensuring that colleagues know what is happening and call for help if needed
- Whilst or before intervention, staff should speak calmly as a way of reassurance e.g. “I am doing this to keep you safe.”.

Use of Intervention

Physical intervention should only be used when there is no realistic alternative and for the shortest amount of time possible. to think creatively about alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the learner and that it reduces rather than increases risk. Any response to challenging behaviour should be reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

Physical intervention must only be in accordance with the following:

- The member of staff should have good grounds for believing the learner is in immediate danger of harming themselves or another person, in danger of seriously damaging property or not maintaining good order or discipline.
- Only the minimum force necessary to prevent injury or damage should be applied.
- Every effort should be made to secure a minimum of two CPI trained members of staff present before applying the intervention.
- Other staff can act as assistants or witnesses.
- Once safe, the intervention should be relaxed to allow the learner to regain self-control.
- Intervention should be an act of care and control, NOT punishment.
- Physical intervention should not be used purely to force compliance with staff instructions when there is no immediate danger to people and property.
- After the event, the intervention should be discussed with the learner and the parents/ carers at the earliest opportunity.
- The intervention should also be recorded appropriately, as outlined below.

Post Intervention Debrief

After any physical intervention a full debrief should take place, with all members of staff involved, so that learning can inform practice. Debriefing must take place as soon as possible after the incident has been dealt with.

Following an incident, it is the policy of the provision to offer support to all involved. This is an opportunity for learning, and time needs to be given for following up incidents so that learners and staff have an opportunity to express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future and appreciate another person's perspective.

Recording Physical Interventions

- Where physical control or restraint has been used a record of the incident will be kept. An CPI Reflection form needs to be completed as soon as possible after the incident, prior to staff going off duty. A copy of this will be held in both the learner's file and in the Positive Handling Reports folder.
- Parents/ carers will be informed by telephone. Phone calls need to be logged on provision tracking systems.
- A Health and Safety Accident/ Incident Form will be completed and returned to the Authority in situations where injury has occurred to either members of staff or learners. This will be done electronically by the Directors.
- Staff and learners will be given basic first aid treatment for any injuries that require treatment.
- Any injuries must be recorded in the provision's accident book.
- Where staff and learners have been involved in an incident involving reasonable force, they should have access to emotional support. This can be provided by other members of staff or, if an exceptionally serious incident occurs, a referral to Occupational Health may be necessary.
- Directors will ensure that parents/ carers are appropriately informed.

Additional/ Potential Post Intervention Actions

- Reviews of Learning Provision Plans/ Behaviour Support Plans may be appropriate.
- Creation/ review of risk assessments.
- The DSL will inform any necessary agencies/ authorities of the physical intervention in accordance with DFE and LA guidance.
- Staff or Learner Disciplinary Procedures - in the case of any action concerning a member of staff, he/ she will be advised to seek advice from his/ her professional association/ union.

- Review of the Engagement for Learning Policy.
- Review of the Positive Handling Policy.

For the safeguarding of both staff and learner, any subsequent investigation of the situation/ incident should be undertaken by a member of staff other than the one applying the physical intervention.

Complaints Regarding Physical Intervention

All complaints about the use of force will be investigated by the Directors.

Where a member of staff has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder – this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. This reinforces the need for staff to fill in CPI Reflection forms on the day of the intervention.

Any complaints about staff will be investigated through the provision's Complaints Procedure Policy. If necessary, the complaint will be dealt with by the Management of Allegations Against Staff Policy.

Other Physical Contact with Learners (DfE - Use of Reasonable Force 2013)

It is not illegal to touch a learner. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a learner is proper and necessary.

Examples of where touching a learner might be proper and necessary:

- When comforting a distressed learner.
- When a learner is being congratulated or praised.
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.
- To give first aid.

Searching, Screening and Confiscation

Searching, screening and confiscation is conducted in line with the DfE's [latest guidance on searching, screening and confiscation](#).

Confiscation

Any prohibited items (as identified in the Engagement for Learning policy) found in a learner's possession because of a search will be confiscated. These items will not be returned to the learner and the police may be contacted.

We will also confiscate any item that is harmful or detrimental to provision discipline. These items will be returned to learners after discussion with Directors and parents/ carers, if appropriate.

Searching Learners

Searches will only be carried out by a member of staff who has been authorised to do so by the Directors, or by the Directors themselves.

A search can be carried out if the authorised member of staff has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the learner is in possession of a prohibited item or any item identified in the provision rules for which a search can be made, or if the learner has agreed.

Wherever possible, the authorised member of staff carrying out the search will be of the same sex as the learner, and there will be another member of staff present as a witness to the search.

An authorised member of staff can carry out a search without another member of staff as a witness if:

- The authorised member of staff carrying out the search reasonably believes there is risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not carried out as a matter of urgency; and
- It is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff.
- When an authorised member of staff conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report this to another member of staff and ensure a written record of the search is kept.

If the authorised member of staff considers a search to be necessary, but is not required urgently, they will seek the advice of the Directors or Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy). During this time the learner will be supervised and kept away from other learners.

An appropriate location for the search will be found. Where possible, this will be away from other learners. The search will only take place on the provision premises or where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the learner, for example on an off-site visit.

Before carrying out a search the authorised member of staff will:

- Assess whether there is an urgent need for a search.
- Assess whether not doing the search would put other learners or staff at risk.
- Consider whether the search would pose a safeguarding risk to the learner.
- Explain to the learner why they are being searched.
- Explain to the learner what a search entails – e.g. I will ask you to turn out your pockets and remove your shoes.
- Explain how and where the search will be carried out.
- Give the learner the opportunity to ask questions.
- Seek the learner's co-operation.

If the learner refuses to agree to a search, the member of staff can give an appropriate behaviour consequence. If they still refuse to co-operate, the member of staff will contact the Directors to try and determine why the learner is refusing to comply.

The authorised member of staff will then decide whether to use reasonable force to search the learner. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration whether conducting the search will prevent the learner harming themselves or others, damaging property or from causing disorder. The authorised member of staff can only use reasonable force to search for strictly prohibited items.

The authorised member of staff may use a metal detector to assist with the search. An authorised member of staff may search a learner's outer clothing, pockets, or possessions. Outer clothing includes:

- Any item of clothing that is not worn immediately over a garment that is being worn wholly next to the skin or being worn as underwear (e.g. a jumper or jacket being worn over a t-shirt).
- Hats, scarves, gloves, shoes, boots.

Searching Learners' Possessions

Possessions means any items that the learner has or appears to have control of, including a bag.

A learner's possessions can be searched for any item if the learner agrees to the search. If the learner does not agree to the search, staff can still carry out a search for strictly prohibited items.

An authorised member of staff can search a learner's possessions when the learner and another member of staff are present.

If there is a serious risk of harm if the search is not conducted immediately, or it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff, the search can be carried out by a single authorised member of staff.

The staff member who carried out the search should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay:

- of any incidents where the member of staff had reasonable grounds to suspect a learner was in possession of a prohibited item.
- if they believe that a search has revealed a safeguarding risk.

All searches for prohibited items, including incidents where no items were found, will be recorded on the provision's safeguarding concern form which will be kept in the learner's electronic file.

Informing Parents/ Carers

Parents/ carers will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item. A member of staff will tell the parents/ carers as soon as is reasonably practicable:

- What happened
- What was found, if anything
- What has been confiscated, if anything
- What action the provision has taken, including any consequences that have been applied to their child

Support After a Search

Irrespective of whether any items are found as the result of any search, the provision will consider whether the learner may be suffering or likely to suffer harm and whether any specific support is needed (due to the reasons for the search, the search itself, or the outcome of the search).

If this is the case, staff will follow the provision's safeguarding policy and speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will consider if pastoral support, an early help intervention or a referral to children's social care is appropriate.

Appendix A:

Guidance for Staff: Handling, Use of Reasonable Force and Restraint



1. Purpose of this document

- To provide for the safety and security of learners in need of physical intervention.
- To clarify for staff the steps they are allowed to take if a situation requiring physical intervention arises
- To enable staff to distinguish between what intervention is and is not acceptable.
- To ensure that staff have read the documentation from DfE and Essex County Council.
- To help ensure that any physical intervention is minimal, infrequent, recorded and that relevant authorities and parents are appropriately informed.

2. The decision to employ a Positive Handling Strategy

You should be aware that all staff who have responsibility for a learner or group of learners are authorised to employ positive handling/ physical intervention strategies in the event they are necessary and that the law allows you to intervene in this manner.

You should however be aware that you have a choice whether or not to intervene physically in any given situation and that you should not do so if you are uncomfortable with the situation or not confident to deal with it effectively.

You should be aware that in the event that you employ a physical intervention strategy, the parents of the child will be informed of your actions, the record of the intervention will be kept on the learner's file and where necessary relevant authorities (e.g. IRT) will be notified of the incident for your own future protection.

3. In what way can you physically intervene?

Any application of physical intervention must only use the minimum force for the minimum amount of time.

There are a number of ways in which you can physically intervene, and you must choose the strategy appropriate to the situation and presenting least risk to yourself, the learner and other persons.

Appropriate actions include:

- **Shepherding or Guiding;** using body positioning and positive gestures to move a learner away from harm. This may include the placing of a hand on the back (between the shoulder blades) and using reasonable force to actively move them from one place to another.
- **Blocking or Interposing;** placing yourself between the learner and their objective (e.g exit, another learner) thereby preventing the potential injury damage or prejudice to good order.
- **Holding and Leading;** leading the learner (with open hand e.g by the upper arm) to prevent them from injury, damage, etc. In cases of resistance from a learner, it may be necessary to employ holding to effectively achieve shepherding and, hence you are actively leading them away.
- **Restraining;** used only in the most extreme cases, restraining may require a significant amount of force in order to prevent significant injury (as described in the policy). Essentially, restraining is a more extreme version of holding, may require more than one adult and may last significantly longer than other strategies. However, the same care must be taken to restrain a learner appropriately.

4. In what ways must you NOT physically intervene?

The purpose of physical intervention is essentially to maintain good order and ensure the safety of all individuals, therefore it is never appropriate to employ a physical intervention strategy if you are not in control

of your own emotions. Physical interventions must never be employed in anger or frustration. If you find yourself angry or frustrated by the situation at hand you must step back and allow someone else to manage the issue.

It is never appropriate to use physical intervention strategies as a punishment.

Just as there are several acceptable intervention strategies, there are also a number of actions it is completely inappropriate to take.

Inappropriate actions include:

- Hitting or Striking - while it is entirely possible that during an intervention (e.g. breaking up a fight) you may be hit yourself, you must not strike a learner.
- Deliberately inflicting pain - it is not okay to twist limbs or put pressure on joints (e.g. arm up a learner's back), pull or hold hair, pinch or hold a learner in a pain inducing way (e.g. by the ear).
- Making contact with sexually sensitive areas of the body - where at all possible contact should be restricted to arms, shoulders and the back as previously described.
- Restricting breathing - by holding round the throat or for a prolonged period around the chest. It is also never appropriate to sit on/straddle a learner or hold them face down to the floor.

5. Guidance for managing your intervention

Always give a learner an opportunity to resolve the situation without use of physical intervention first.

Always send for assistance from colleagues or another authorised adult; other learners should never be involved in physical intervention. You may have to intervene before help arrives, but not managing this entirely on your own is safer for all concerned.

Be aware of your emotions. Are you comfortable and confident to deal with this scenario without anger? If not – don't intervene.

Continue to communicate with the learner (and witnesses) throughout the incident even if the learner doesn't respond. Be clear about what you are doing and inform the learner that the intervention will cease when it is no longer necessary.

Apply only appropriate strategies and the minimum required force to achieve the required outcome (prevention of injury/harm, learner/staff safety, restoration of good order). Release the learner once this has been achieved.

Manage the situation calmly – even if the learner responds negatively.

Complete a 'CPI Reflection Form' as soon as possible after the event.

6. Minimising the need for physical intervention

In most circumstances physical intervention should be a last resort or an emergency action. Therefore, all staff should:

- endeavour to create a calm environment which will minimise the risk of incidents where the use of physical intervention may be required.
- endeavour to teach learners how to manage strong emotions and conflict through opportunities for personal development and wider aspects of the provision curriculum.
- quickly seek to de-escalate incidents if they do arise.
- only use reasonable force when the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force.
- be aware of risk assessments and positive handling plans for specific individual learners.



CPI Reflection Form

Date: _____

Learner/s involved: _____

What happened? (Give a factual account. Refer to all staff/ learners involved, their responses and the times of events)

What actions did staff take?

What were the possible triggers/ precipitating factors? (For both staff and learners)

Lessons learned (What went well? What could be improved?)

Any further actions

Signed _____ (Staff performing CPI)

Signed _____ (Staff performing CPI)

Signed _____ (Director)