

Greenshaw Learning Trust

Positive Handling and Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy

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This Greenshaw Learning Trust (GLT) Policy applies to GLT as a whole and to all the schools and service units in the Trust.

The Greenshaw Learning Trust, including all the schools and services within the Trust, their Trustees, governors and staff, must abide by this GLT Policy.

In implementing this Policy the Governing Body, Headteacher and school staff, and Trust shared service staff, must take account of any advice or instruction given to them by the GLT Assistant Director for SEND & Special Provision, the GLT CEO or Board of Trustees. If there is any question about the interpretation or implementation of this Policy, the GLT Assistant Director for SEND & Special Provision or GLT CEO should be consulted

This GLT Policy is subject to the GLT Scheme of Delegation. If there is any ambiguity or conflict then the Scheme of Delegation and any alteration or restriction to the Scheme approved by the Board of Trustees takes precedence.

Approval and review

- This Policy is the responsibility of the GLT Assistant Director of SEND & Special Provision.
- This Policy was agreed by the Board of Trustees on: 19 December 2025
- This Policy is due for review by the Board of Trustees by: 31 December 2028

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Introduction

A positive and proactive culture for behaviour in school supports the well-being and safety of all children and staff. All staff must prioritise positive and proactive strategies to promote safe behaviours and de-escalation. It is acknowledged that, dependent on a child's age and stage of development, physical intervention (positive handling) might be required to divert a child from a destructive or disruptive action, and, in exceptional circumstances staff may need to take action in situations where the use of restrictive physical intervention(s) (RPI) may be required. By setting out clear definitions and guidance, this GLT Policy seeks to minimise the use of restrictive interventions with a focus on proactive support, prevention and de-escalation.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff:

- i. clearly understand when the use of reasonable force is necessary and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures
- ii. are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur and, where appropriate to the setting, know who the designated staff members are and who has accessed enhanced training.

The application of any form of RPI can place students and staff in a vulnerable position. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this procedure. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the procedure and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible.

RPI will only be used as an appropriate last resort and when there is no other alternative.

Physical Contact Guidance

The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance to school staff on the use of physical contact so that staff can meet the needs of children with confidence, whilst safeguarding themselves and those in their care. It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, is proper and necessary.

Physical contact can take many forms. A handshake is an accepted form of contact in many cultures, some people also touch the elbow or pat the back as part of a greeting. Staff are in a position of trust. They therefore need to maintain a professional distance and take greater care in their physical interactions. This applies equally on the school premises and elsewhere.

Equally, we recognise that appropriate physical contact is often an integral part of working with young people. For example:

- i. Holding the hand of a child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school;
- ii. When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;

- iii. To demonstrate exercises of sports/PE techniques.
- iv. To demonstrate how to use a piece of equipment e.g. IT or teaching a pupil how to hold and play a musical instrument.
- v. To administer first aid or support with intimate care.
- vi. To provide regulation support for children with complex sensory profiles.
- vii. To prompt or help young children.
- viii. To comfort a child who is in distress

Definitions

Physical Contact

In situations in which passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom, takes place, professional judgement must apply. This should take into account knowledge of the individual child. Staff should act reasonably and in children's best interests at all times.

Physical Intervention (Positive Handling)

This may be used to divert a child from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a child by the hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force. All physical interventions are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. Staff will look for early warning signs, taking steps to divert behaviours. Staff will look for alternatives to physical intervention and use well-chosen words to try and de-escalate a situation.

Reasonable Force

This covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

'Reasonable in the circumstances'

This means using no more force than is needed.

Restraint (Restrictive Physical Intervention – RPI)

This means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances e.g. when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.

Restrictive Intervention (RI)

Any planned or reactive action which limits a child's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently is classed as a restrictive intervention. This may include the use of equipment, medication, or seclusion, and may or may not involve the use of reasonable force. The use of equipment, medication or seclusion is never ordinarily allowed in GLT schools.

RPI and RI are never to be used for the purpose of punishment.

Seclusion

Seclusion is the supervised confinement and isolation of a child, away from other children, in an area from which the child is prevented from leaving of their own free will. This is distinct from disciplinary removal. Removal is a situation where a child is required to spend a limited time out of the classroom for disciplinary reasons in a setting where they can continue their education.

Significant Incident

A significant incident is defined as:

- any incident where the use of reasonable force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between children and staff; and/or
- any incident which would constitute an RI i.e. an action which limits a child's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently.

Any significant incident is reported to parents/carers. In deciding what is a serious incident, teachers will use their professional judgement and consider the:

- pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident;
- degree of force used;
- effect on the pupil or member of staff; and
- the child's age.

Underpinning Values

Everyone attending or working at this school has the right to:

- i. a recognition of their unique identity
- ii. be treated with respect and dignity
- iii. learn and work in a safe environment
- iv. be protected from harm

All staff have a duty of care to all children so where a child is putting themselves or others in direct danger, all staff must act appropriately in the child's best interests within the context of the situation. Staff are not expected to put themselves in danger, and removing children and themselves from a source of danger is appropriate. Staff are not required to go beyond what is reasonable. In particular, it is acceptable for any member of staff to decide that they will not use physical intervention for personal reasons.

Children attending this school and their parents have a right to:

- i. individual consideration of children's needs by staff that have responsibility for their care and protection

- ii. expect staff to undertake duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies and procedures
- iii. be informed about school rules, relevant policies and procedures and the expected conduct of all children and staff working in the school and be informed about the school's complaint procedure

The school will ensure that all children understand the need for and respond to clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in the school. Where necessary, appropriate support will be given and reasonable adjustments made in line with duties set out in the Equality Act (2010).

As part of the whole school community, parents commit themselves to working in partnership with the school to support their child to meet the requirements of the school behaviour policy.

Training

- Training needs are assessed by the school in relation to foreseeable risk.
- All staff will receive training to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the safe and lawful use of reasonable force and physical interventions with a focus on preventative and de-escalation strategies.
- Staff who are likely to need to use positive handling and/or reasonable force will have access to training that reflects the principles set out in this procedure, for example Team Teach training. The level to which staff are trained will be assessed in relation to foreseeable risk.
- All staff will be made aware of which staff have received enhanced training, their names and roles will be displayed in an appropriate location within the school (e.g. staff room) for reference.

Escalating Situations

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 93) stipulates that the use of reasonable force may be legally defensible to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following;

- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils; whether the behaviour occurs in a classroom, during a teaching session or elsewhere
- self-injuring or placing himself or herself at risk
- injuring others
- causing damage to property, including that of the pupil himself or herself
- committing a criminal offence (even if the pupil is below the age of criminal responsibility)

Use of reasonable force in the above situations in relation to a pupil can be exercised only where:

- a member of staff and the pupil are on school premises; or
- they are elsewhere and the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned.

Schools within GLT can use reasonable force to:

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

Acceptable use of Restrictive Physical Intervention

RPI can only be deemed reasonable if:

- it is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident
- it is a last resort and there is no other alternative
- it is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is desired to prevent
- the age, understanding and the gender of the child are taken into account
- the children's additional needs are taken into account
- it is delivered with the principle of least amount of intervention for the shortest period of time possible
- it is likely to reduce risk
- it does not place the child at increased risk through the use of unacceptable approaches such as techniques that could affect a child's airway, breathing or circulation.

Wherever possible, assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervention.

The form of physical intervention may involve staff doing the following:

- escorting a child
- shepherding a child away
- Using positive handling techniques to support the child to transition to a place (physical or emotional) of safety

Recording

Where a significant incident (including RIs) has taken place, a record of the incident will be made in the Bound Book (in an administrative or safeguarding context, a "bound book" is a specific, formal document used to record serious incidents). In addition to the record in the Bound Book, an incident will be raised on CPOMs. The record on CPOMs will include reference to the page number of the record in the Bound Book and a record of the conversation with parents informing them of the incident. All significant incidents will be reported to parents by the end of the school day or at the earliest reasonable opportunity. All staff must be made aware of the location of the Bound Book and must be given access to it whenever appropriate. All recordings will be completed as soon as possible after the event and certainly by the end of the school day.

Any significant incident—will be reported as soon as possible to the Headteacher or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team designated by the Headteacher. The record of the significant incident will be reviewed by the Headteacher or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team. Where necessary, appropriate actions or investigations will be undertaken.

Records are kept in line with the GLT Data Retention Policy.

Action after an Incident

The Headteacher or appropriate designated member of the Senior Leadership Team will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a child, this will be pursued through the appropriate Policy or Procedure. Members of staff will be kept informed of any action taken.

In addition to the above, staff and children involved in the incident will be given an opportunity to debrief and repair the relationship in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and stage of development. It is acknowledged that any incident of RPI can be very upsetting for all involved.

Positive Handling/Support Plans

It is recognised that for some children additional support is needed, for example, where a child has -complex sensory needs and might become over-stimulated and distressed. Where this is the case, schools will give due consideration to the joint Department of Health and Department for Education guidance Reducing the Risk for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention. As part of the child's support, a positive handling plan might be put in place or this might be captured in an appropriate document such as a behaviour support plan, written together with the parents/carers. The main purpose of the positive handling plan (or equivalent) is to ensure consistent understanding of possible triggers for the child and the consistent implementation of effective proactive support and de-escalation strategies to prevent the need for RPI. As part of this discussion, where appropriate in exceptional circumstances, parents/carers and school will also transparently discuss behaviours which would result in the need for restrictive physical intervention to reduce risk, what this would look like and how it will be shared with the parent.

If restrictive physical intervention is used for a child who does not have a positive handling plan or equivalent (e.g. appropriate behaviour support plan) in place, parents/carers will be invited in to write one together with the school following the first incident. Every plan is individualised to each child so as to personalise de-escalation strategies. Any plan will be shared with all relevant staff and where appropriate training provided to support consistent implementation of the proactive support and de-escalation strategies.

Monitoring of Incidents

Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team to the escalating needs of any child(ren) for whom reviewed provision may be required. Data on reasonable force and RIs will be analysed termly by Headteachers and Education Directors to identify patterns and implement improvements to further minimise use of RIs.

Complaints

Parents have the right to complain about actions taken by school staff. If a specific allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff, then the guidance for dealing with allegations against staff will be followed, as outlined in our Safeguarding Policy.

Other complaints will be dealt with under the school's Complaints Policy, which can be found on the school website.