

# LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING

## LA SALETTE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

### POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

*\*Updated using the 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools guidance April 2026'*



**Spring 2026**

# **Positive Handling Policy**

## **Introduction**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour and Safeguarding & Child Protection Policies. It details how we will implement guidance provided by DfE, with regard to restrictive interventions including the use of reasonable force and seclusion.

## **Objectives**

- To emphasise the importance of minimising the need to use restrictive interventions, such as through prevention and de-escalation.
- To clearly set out the circumstances in which staff may use reasonable force and/or seclusion.
- To clearly outline the procedures for recording and reporting such incidents.

## **Who can use reasonable force?**

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. To prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

## **Minimising the use of restrictive interventions**

Staff should always seek to de-escalate situations through planning and prevention to reduce and minimise the need for restrictive interventions. Staff should routinely consider the following:

- How is the classroom environment set out?
- What behaviour management strategies is the school or staff member using and how effective are they?
- The use of tone in de-escalating a situation.
- Consider the triggers that let to escalation of behaviour.
- Is a behaviour support plan in place?
- Does the pupil have specific needs that require reasonable adjustment?
- Does the child have a safe space and strategies to calm and de-escalate their behaviour?

## **Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate**

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions and the decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation.

**Before using restrictive intervention, staff should consider the following:**

**Is it necessary?**

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

**Is it proportionate?**

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

**Have you considered the pupil's welfare?**

- Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.
- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

**Seclusion**

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent. Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.

The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

An incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported.

### **Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)**

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety.

In particular, pupils who are non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

Schools should seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND. For example, schools should consider how the school culture and environment may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and seek to support pupils to cope with situations that they may find distressing.

Schools should utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. They should also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, school staff should work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary positive handling plans. Positive Handling Plan support plans should outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively. Positive Handling support plans should detail

circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This should be discussed in conjunction with the relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan. Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, schools must have risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies. **See Appendix B**

Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan. Any Positive Handling support plans should be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil. Where a pupil has a disability, the school has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage so that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils.

### **How are significant incidents of use of force or non-force seclusion recorded?**

As part of the school's duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. They should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and this should be completed on the same day as the incident.

**All instances of the use of force are recorded in the Bound and Numbered Book, located in the Headeachers office. See Appendix A**

**A copy of the completed incident record must be provided to parents, preferably on the same day, in face-to-face meeting or by email if acceptable to the parent.**

The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's Positive Handling support plan.

### **Unacceptable uses of force**

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Pupils should not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen.

The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible. Where appropriate, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible.

For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

## **Use of reasonable force to search pupils**

Head teachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only.

Prohibited item include:

- *Drugs*
- *Alcohol and tobacco*
- *Pornographic images*
- *Stolen items*
- *Any item considered a weapon (such as knives or blades)*

## **Terminology used in this policy**

**Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

**Reasonable force:** a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

**Significant incident:** any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with pupils' within this document. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

**Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

**Restraint:** a term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.

## **Appendix A: Example of Page from Bound and Numbered Book**

RISK ASSESSMENT AND SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT / RESTRAINT / RESTRICTION RECORD  
For Additional Details Refer To Supporting Documentation

Name of the child or young person concerned: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the person using the measure: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of any other people present: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person completing this record: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of the behaviour leading to the use of the measure (what the child or young person was doing or saying):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure (what you did - what you said - what you tried):  
 Humour  Verbal advice and support  Firm clear directions  Negotiation  Limited Choices  Distraction  Diversion  
 Reassurance  Planned ignoring  Contingent Touch  Calm talking  Calm Stance  Patience  Withdrawal Offered  Withdrawal Directed  Swap Adult  Reminders about Consequences  Success Reminders

Why Was The Measure Necessary? - (describe your dynamic risk assessment and why you honestly believed that the measure you chose was in the best interests of the child or young person)

Risk to Self  Risk to Others  Risk to Safe Physical Environment  Risk to Safe Psychological Environment  Prevention of Psychological Distress  Prevention of Physical Harm  Prevention of Criminal offence  Temporary Loss of Competence or Capacity

A description of the measure used (what you did and what you said):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The effectiveness of the measure: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration of any measure of physical restraint or restriction in minutes and any time intervals between provision of active support: \_\_\_\_\_

Any consequences of the use of the measure: \_\_\_\_\_

A description of any injury to the child concerned or any other person: \_\_\_\_\_

A description of any medical treatment  offered or  administered: \_\_\_\_\_

- External Agencies Informed and supporting records: \_\_\_\_\_
- Medical Referral \_\_\_\_\_ (Date and/or log number)
  - Social Worker \_\_\_\_\_ (Date and/or log number)
  - Health & Safety Report (RIDDOR) \_\_\_\_\_ (Date and/or log number)
  - LADO \_\_\_\_\_ (Date and/or log number)
  - Safer Schools Partnership Support Officer \_\_\_\_\_ (Date and/or log number)
  - Placing Authority \_\_\_\_\_ (Date and/or log number)
  - Responsible Parent \_\_\_\_\_ (Date and/or log number)

Confirmation that the person authorised to make the official record has spoken to the child or young person concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure and the feelings of both of them.

Views of the young person and any additional comments:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name and signature of the person authorised to make this record: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, signature and designation of person monitoring the records: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Checked: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

# Positive Handling Plan

Name	Class/Year	EHCP/SEN Support?					
Medical Information:							
Trigger Behaviours:							
<b>Support Strategies (used before any consideration of physical intervention)</b>							
'Chill out' time		Distraction		Give Space		Talk calmly	
Repeat request		Reassure/success reminder		State alternative/ 2 choices		Planned ignoring	
Verbal support/praise for partial compliance		Give to count		Remove stimulus		Negotiation	
Swap-out adult		Supportive Touch		Request additional staff support		Humour	
Detail of any individual strategy for this child							
<b>Preferred Handling Strategies to be used:</b>							
Friendly Arm (arm around the shoulder)		Escorting (Side by Side walking)		Standing Nearby (Indicating direction of compliance)			
Open Palm guidance (Wide arms, palms open)		Single arm support 'Caring C guidance'		Hand Holding (Leading not pulling)			

## Signatures

Parent		
SENco		
Headteacher		
Staff shared with?		