



---

Academies Trust

# Positive Handling Policy

- Date approved by Trust Board - 20 February 2026
- Applicable from - 1 April 2026
- Next review date - July 2026
- Policy owner - Karine Hendley, Regional Director

# Contents

LIST OF CHANGES	2
Introduction	2
Key Terminology	3
Principles	3
Purpose	4
Our approach	4
Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention	5
Responsibility of Staff	6
Personal Safety	7
Positive Behaviour Support	7
Seclusion, Time Out and Withdrawal	8
Restrictive Physical Interventions and 'Behaviour Individual Pupil Risk Assessment' (BIPRA)	8
Training	9
Actions and Support after an incident	9
Debriefing Arrangements	10
Arrangements for Informing Parents	10
Monitoring Incidents	11
Searching Pupils - Power to Search Pupils	11
Medical and Mechanical Restraint	12
Medication (Chemical Restraint)	12
Mechanical Restraint	13
Complaints and Allegations	13
Whistleblowing	13
Key Legal References	14
Appendix i	15
Appendix ii	20

# LIST OF CHANGES

- Throughout: Change of terminology from 'physical intervention' to 'restrictive physical intervention'
- Addition of key terminology section
- P2: Change guidance document to new 2026 DfE guidance and addition of 2025 regulations
- P3: Key Terminology section added to support understanding of restrictive intervention
- P4: Addition of deescalation strategies will be used before resorting to restrictive intervention
- P5: Addition of paragraph stating that we do not operate non-contact policies
- P6: Addition of 'never restrict airways and circulation' in the bullet points
- P6: Clarification that ground recovery holds will only be used in exceptional circumstances in special schools and that any child held on the ground will be repositioned as soon as possible
- P8: Updated description of 'seclusion' to bring in line with DfE definition from 2026
- P9: Added that all academies share arrangements for understanding BIPRAs etc. during staff induction
- P9: Added link to the Trust Google Form (to be copied locally for each academy)
- P9: Clarification on only one form per incident (but all adults involved contributing)
- P10: Updating debriefing arrangements to include witnesses and an impartial adult
- P10: Updating section informing parents - to include same day, in writing, to include approx length of RPI and degree of force used
- P11: Updated section on responsibilities of Trust Board to monitor and review RPIs
- P14: Updated legal framework to include new guidance in 2025/26
- *The RPI Recording form has been updated in line with DfE 2026 guidance to include SEND status of the child and a brief description of why the adult found the RPI necessary*
- A template letter for parents can be found in Appendix iii

## Introduction

At the Co-op Academies Trust, we are committed to a positive behaviour policy which encourages pupils to make positive choices and staff are given support to meet the expectations set out in the Code of Conduct. We firmly believe that, in most instances, staff should not use any form of restrictive physical intervention on pupils. The need for physical use of force is regarded as a last resort in managing any situation. This policy should be read in connection with the academy Behaviour Policy which sets out how we will ensure that there is a positive climate for learning and how we will intervene at the earliest possible moment to limit the need for staff to use force.

Co-op Academies however, recognises that there is a need, reflected in common law, to physically intervene when there is an obvious risk to the safety of pupils, staff and property. This applies both on and off site. If used at all, the use of force to control or restrain pupils will be used in the context of a respectful, supportive relationship, in order to ensure minimal risk of injury to pupils and staff.

This policy is based on the following advice and guidance:

- The Education Act (1996)
- The Education and Inspections Act (2006)

- Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Searching, screening and confiscation (DfE, January 2022)
- When To Call The Police – guidance for schools and colleges (NPCC, 2020)
- [Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention - GOV.UK](#)

This policy replaces all previous versions and explicitly supersedes the "Use of reasonable force (2013)" advice.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Academy policies for:

- Behaviour
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND Policy

And the trust policies for:

- Violence and Assaults Against Colleagues
- Exclusions
- Whistleblowing

## Key Terminology

To ensure compliance with the 2026 framework, the following definitions apply:

**Restrictive Intervention:** The umbrella term describing both physical and non-physical actions aimed to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of a pupil's body.

**Significant Incident:** Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact (such as comforting or first aid).

**Restraint:** A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits movement, which may or may not include direct physical contact (e.g., removing a pupil's walking aid or crutches)

## Principles

Our policy for restrictive physical intervention is based upon the following principles:

- Restrictive intervention should be used only as a last resort when other appropriate strategies have failed; and only where it would be lawful to do so
- Any physical contact should be only the minimum required
- Restrictive intervention must be used in ways that maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned
- Incidents must be recorded and reported to the headteacher as soon as possible
- Parents / Carers will be informed on the day of the incidents
- Staff will be trained to intervene safely by an accredited Team Teach provider
- Where pupils are identified to be likely to exhibit unsafe behaviours, individual plans are in place - identifying deescalation strategies and recommended Team Teach holds

## Purpose

This policy aims to set out the exceptional circumstances where restrictive physical intervention of pupils will be absolutely necessary. The Education Act of 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act of 2006, clarify the powers of teachers, and other staff in school, to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from:

- Causing injury to his/herself or others;
- Committing an offence;
- Damaging property;
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order & discipline.

## Our approach

At Co-op Academies we aim to avoid the need for restrictive intervention and regard this as a last resort in managing situations. We always aim to deal with behaviour using a positive approach and therefore this policy should be read in connection with our Behaviour Policy and SEND Policy. Throughout this policy we refer to 'restrictive physical intervention' as this is the widely recognised term used when we have to hold children to keep them safe. However, we should always avoid using language of 'restriction' when we talk to children, parents and staff. We want our staff and families to understand that if we do need to resort to restrictive intervention, that we are doing this to keep children safe and therefore would use this language, in practice.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which restrictive physical intervention would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the academy policies outlined above, particularly when dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of pupils during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and have a 'Duty of Care' to all pupils in their care. They must, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure all pupils' safety and wellbeing and have a lawful justification for taking reasonable physical steps to prevent injury to any person, or damage to property. Taking no action which results in a person being injured, could leave a member of staff open to an allegation that they were in neglect of their duty of care.

Staff will act in the best interests of all concerned, balancing the need to keep restrictive intervention to a minimum with the need to keep all pupils safe.

Staff should understand the importance of listening to and respecting pupils to create an environment that is calm and supportive, especially when dealing with pupils who may have emotional and behavioural needs, which may increase their aggression. All staff should understand the importance of responding to the feelings of the pupil, which lie beneath the behaviour, as well as the behaviour itself. However, there may be occasions where staff will need to intervene in order to keep children safe. We want our staff to be confident in managing situations where they may need to physically intervene in order to ensure that pupils are kept from harm. This is a difficult balance. Our responsibility is first and foremost about protecting the pupils in our care. Staff are expected to exercise their professional judgement in any situation involving challenging behaviour.

If a pupil reaches crisis point and is behaving in a way that is unsafe either to themselves or to others then deescalation and non-physical strategy will be used to manage the behaviour positively to prevent a deterioration of the situation. Staff should view restrictive physical intervention with a pupil as a 'last resort' and for the purposes of maintaining a safe environment.

Examples of situations where restrictive physical intervention may be appropriate include:

- when a pupil is at risk of physically assaulting a member of staff;
- when a pupil is at risk of physically assaulting another pupil;
- when a pupil is, or is on the verge of, committing deliberate damage or vandalism to property;
- when a pupil is, or is at risk of, causing injury or damage by accident, by rough play or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects;
- when a pupil is at risk of absconding from class or tries to leave the school \*
- when a pupil's behaviour threatens the orderly running of a school
- when a pupil is seriously disrupting a lesson and this is not allowing other pupils to learn

\*Refusal of a pupil to remain in a particular place is not enough on its own to justify force. It would be justifiable where allowing a pupil to leave would entail serious risks to the pupil's safety (taking into account age and understanding), to the safety of other pupils or staff, or of damage to property. For example, a child who is unable to understand road /community safety due to age or need would be at serious risk if not prevented from leaving the building.

Because of our commitment to keeping children safe and in line with DfE guidance, Co-op Academies Trust does not operate a non-contact policy in any academy, nor will it grant requests from parents or staff to never use force, as this may prevent staff from fulfilling their duty of care.

## Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention

Restrictive physical intervention should be applied as an act of care, support and control to safeguard pupils and staff. Adults will use therapeutic language until a pupil is able to reach a point of emotional regulation. It should never take a form which could be seen as punishment. Staff response to an incident should seek to employ a reasonable and proportionate level of force in response to a pupil's behaviour as set out in the pupil's Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP).

Staff are only authorised to use *reasonable force* when applying restrictive physical intervention, although there is no absolute definition of this. What constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. Part of this assessment will require the level of force needed to be kept under review as necessary. Staff should apply the training they receive to de-escalate where possible then use the appropriate holds as practised in the training. However, as a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent danger should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below and should only be used when the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force. In order to ensure that our practices are open and transparent, staff must ensure that they document the hold which will also include reasons and justifications for the decisions to physically intervene. Only those holds for which staff have been trained may be used.

Staff need to be aware that they are required to justify their decisions in writing through the recording and reporting procedures outlined in this policy. When circumstances justify, staff as a last resort, may:

- physically interpose between pupils
- block a pupil's path
- hold a pupil in a controlled manner

- use escorting techniques in a controlled manner
- in extreme circumstances, use more restrictive holds

During any incident when restrictive physical intervention becomes necessary staff will:

- Ask a pupil to stop doing what they are doing and explain it is unsafe
- Use simple and clear language
- Explain to the pupil that you are going to intervene physically to keep them safe
- Wherever possible, seek assistance from another member of staff to witness and support
- Use the least restrictive hold, for the minimum amount of time, using therapeutic language
- Continue to use all available verbal and non-verbal support and de-escalation strategies
- Remind the pupil that you are holding them to keep them safe
- Protect the pupil's dignity
- Ensure that their hold is reasonable, necessary and proportionate

Staff will never:

- Act in anger (involve another member of staff if you fear loss of control)
- Use restrictive intervention or force in order to inflict any pain e.g.
  - holding a pupil around the neck, by the collar or in any way that could restrict breathing, airways or circulation
  - punching, kicking or slapping a pupil
  - holding or pulling a pupil's hair
  - twisting a pupil's limbs or forcing limbs against a joint
  - the 'double basket hold' which involves holding a pupil's arms across their chest
- Get involved in prolonged verbal exchanges with pupils
- Involve other pupils when using restrictive physical interventions
- Use restrictive physical intervention or intervention as punishment or to gain compliance

Team-Teach Ground Recovery Holds are advanced techniques and carry elevated levels of risk. As part of our commitment to safeguard our pupils, these holds are only used within our special schools and only when exceptional circumstances require them. In the rare instance that these holds are required, only staff who have had the specialist additional training will administer them. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff must release the hold or re-position into a safer standing or seated position as quickly as possible.

## Responsibility of Staff

The Education and Inspections Act authorises all staff at a school to use reasonable force to support pupils who are unsafe. At Co-op Academies Trust, we will ensure that staff who are required to use restrictive physical intervention will have received appropriate training via Team Teach trainers.

Where a pupil is recognised as likely to behave in ways which may require restrictive intervention, staff should initiate production of a Positive Behaviour Support Plan (see Appendix). This is the document which captures a pupil's likely triggers, and the specific de-escalation strategies and the restrictive holds which should be used. In addition, if a pupil presents a safety risk to themselves and/or others, an [Individual Pupil Risk Assessment \(IPRA\)](#) must be completed to record the potential risks and how these

are mitigated. These plans will be drawn up in conjunction with the SEND coordinator and shared with all relevant staff in school. It will also be made available and discussed with the named pupil, parents/carers and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. social worker). These plans must be followed and implemented by all members of staff.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employees have a responsibility to report any circumstances which give rise to an increased risk to their health and safety. Staff who have, or acquire, permanently or temporarily, any medical condition that may impact on their ability to carry out pupils' PBSPs have a duty to report these to the Headteacher immediately, as there may be an impact on their own safety and that of colleagues and/or pupils.

If, during an incident where reasonable force has been used, a person is injured, they must be seen by a first aider and the First Aid Policy should be followed. Any pupil injuries must be recorded on the Restrictive Physical Intervention form. For adults, this must be reported to their line manager and relevant members of staff - either by themselves or by another member of staff. All violent incidents must be recorded via the Parago FM system. This two part form firstly records the incident in detail. The second part of the form details the relevant management actions which will mitigate any future recurrences. The 'Violence and Assaults Against Colleagues' trust policy provides more detail.

## Personal Safety

There may be times when a member of staff may need to defend themselves from a physical assault or 'break away' from a pupil who has taken hold of them. It is acknowledged that with some disengagement techniques pupils may encounter some minimal discomfort when appropriate release techniques are used. However, this is very brief, transient and poses less of a risk than the behaviour they are employed in response to, e.g. biting. Where relevant, staff will be given input on key skills and principles regarding personal safety and self-defence, as part of their ongoing training.

## Positive Behaviour Support

Positive Behaviour Support describes a broad spectrum of risk reduction strategies. Positive Behaviour Support is a holistic approach involving policy, guidance, management of the environment, and deployment of staff. It also involves personal behaviour, diversion, diffusion and de-escalation. [Positive Behaviour Support Plans](#) are a plan for the positive management of pupils who present with challenging behaviour as a result of their SEND, and as such, need the additional support.

A planned intervention is one that is described/outlined in the pupil's PBSP. This should cover most interventions, as possible scenarios will be identified and planned for when the PBSP is drawn up. These interventions may include the use of Team Teach restrictive intervention techniques.

An emergency restrictive intervention may be necessary if a situation arises that was not foreseen or is uncharacteristic of the pupil. Members of staff retain their Duty of Care to pupils and any response, even in an emergency, must be proportionate to the circumstances.

Where behaviour records identify a possible need for restrictive physical intervention, PBSPs are written for individual pupils and where possible, these will be designed through multi agency collaboration in conjunction with the pupil and their parent/carer. With parental consent, these plans may be shared with

other agencies/services supporting the pupil to facilitate consistency of approach so far as is possible. Where a pupil presents a risk to themselves and/or others, an IPRA will be created.

## Seclusion, Time Out and Withdrawal

With reference to the DFE guidance, the strategies of 'time out' and 'withdrawal' may be used in order to support positive behaviour. The use of withdrawal and time out are detailed in the Academy Behaviour Policy. Co-op Academies does not support the use of seclusion as a behaviour management tool. It is important to understand the distinctions between these:

- **Seclusion:** keeping a pupil confined alone and preventing them from leaving through physical obstruction or the belief they will be punished if they try to leave. Co-op Academies does not support this approach.
- **\*Time out:** involves restricting the young person's access to positive reinforcements as part of their PBSP, in a room or area that they may freely leave. It does not necessarily mean time out of a room or class and can refer to a withdrawal of attention or things they find rewarding. It could be achieved by moving them to a different part of the classroom or by sending them to another class / group or quiet area
- **Withdrawal:** involves removing the young person from a situation which causes anxiety or distress to a location where they can be continuously observed and supported until they are ready to resume their usual activities. This can mean removing a child from the group to allow them time to calm down or to prevent a situation from escalating. This could be time in the playground, a quiet room, an office or another classroom - supervised by a supportive member of staff.

\*this is separate to, and distinct from, the use of 'time out' as a regulation activity - which can be a helpful preventative measure for avoiding dysregulation for some pupils. Time out, used in this way, is a proactive and supportive intervention, detailed on behaviour plans and can be self or adult directed

## Restrictive Physical Interventions and 'Behaviour Individual Pupil Risk Assessment' (BIPRA)

Both challenging behaviour and RPI will involve a risk to both staff and pupils. A risk assessment aims to balance these risks. The aim of the BIPRA and of this policy is to reduce the risks associated with pupils challenging behaviour as far as it is reasonably practicable - the risks associated with the behaviour itself and the risk of managing that behaviour. The risks of employing an intervention should be lower than the risk of not doing so.

Pupils whose challenging behaviour may pose a risk to staff or pupils will be subject to an Individual Pupil Risk Assessment IPRA (with a behaviour focus) - a [BIPRA](#). It might be the case that a pupil has a Positive Behaviour Support plan (see above) but does not need a risk assessment. However, if it is decided that a pupil does need a risk assessment, then a BIPRA should be completed - along with the Positive Behaviour Support Plan. No pupil should have a risk assessment for behaviour, without a PBSP.

BIPRAs must be shared with all relevant staff and accessible for all staff (e.g, supply). All academies have processes in place for ensuring staff have signed that they have read and understood a pupil's BIPRA which is outlined as part of staff induction and training.

All BIPRAs will be reviewed at least annually, as a minimum expectation. In mainstream academies, this should be termly - when reviewing pupil passports and after significant incidents of positive handling.

All BIPRAs will be quality assured by a Team Teach Trained senior leader at the academy - or from another academy - in the exceptional circumstance that this is not possible internally.

## Training

Co-op Academies are committed to using Team Teach. Team Teach Ltd is a training provider accredited through the Institute of Conflict Management (ICM). All staff will receive basic training in the use of de-escalation techniques, which can be delivered by expert colleagues in school. This training will be given as part of staff induction and repeated regularly throughout the year as part of briefings and CPD.

An appropriate number (minimum of 4) of staff will receive Team Teach training to support where restrictive intervention is necessary. The headteacher will decide what an appropriate number of staff is for their setting. The vast majority of the Team Teach training involves the use of non-physical, de-escalation strategies and staff are supported to understand the nature of complex behaviours and how to support the pupils. Schools should request that their trainer covers the holds listed in the RPI form and detailed [here](#). It is the responsibility of the headteacher to ensure that appropriate training is kept up to date (inline with Team Teach requirements). All special schools provide all staff with full Team Teach training.

## Actions and Support after an incident

Incidents outlined in this policy often occur in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. The Headteacher (or the senior teacher designated to act in their place when they are absent) should be notified of any incident immediately and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and anyone injured as a result of the incident should be offered support. Where possible, and appropriate, staff will always seek to gather the voice of the pupil after an incident. All incidents of RPI should be recorded as soon as possible on the [Restrictive Physical Intervention Google Form](#) and added to Arbor as an RPI. Special schools may choose to upload these to Behaviour Watch. Mainstream schools (and special schools not using Behaviour Watch) will record a summary of the RPI on Arbor. All sections of this report should be completed so that any patterns of behaviour can be identified and addressed. In the event of any future complaint or allegation, this record will provide essential and accurate information. Witnesses (both pupil and staff) may be asked to provide a written account if appropriate. This should be kept with the RPI form. All staff involved in the incident should contribute to the completion of the form to ensure an accurate account (although only one form per incident needs to be completed).

The Principal/Head Teacher 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 pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure:

- Review of the Positive Behaviour Support Plan and / or risk assessment

- Child Protection Procedure (this may involve the police and/or Social Care)
- Staff or Pupil Disciplinary Procedures
- School Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Procedure in cases of violence or assault against a member of staff (on case by case basis - see trust Exclusions Policy)

The member of staff will be kept informed of any action taken, where possible. In the case of any action concerning a member of staff, she/he will be advised to seek advice from her/his professional association/union.

A member of the leadership team or an appropriate member of staff (under the direction of the headteacher) will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, and usually (unless exceptional circumstances prevent this) on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it.

## Debriefing Arrangements

The pupil and the member of staff will be checked for any sign of injury after an incident. First aid will be administered to anyone who requires it, or medical treatment obtained.

The pupil will be given appropriate support after the incident and time to de-escalate. When they are ready, they will be invited to share their views and supported in giving a full account of what happened. In all cases, unless it is not possible, the debrief will be conducted by an impartial adult who was not involved in the incident. Staff will attempt to establish the cause of the incident escalating and will look at ways that the risk of this happening could have been reduced. Where necessary, plans will be put in place to deal with future incidents (including a PBSP review; an IPRA or a new plan being drawn up). At all times, the well-being of the pupil will be at the forefront of the debrief.

All members of staff involved should be allowed a period of debrief and recovery from the incident. A senior member of staff (or their nominee) will be available to provide support to the staff involved. Support will also be provided, if necessary, to any witnesses (pupils or staff) to the use of force - particularly where a peer was injured or distressed by the event.

The Headteacher (or their nominee) will initiate the recording process if not already under way and review each incident to ensure that any necessary lessons are learned.

## Arrangements for Informing Parents

All parents/carers will be informed at the first possible point, and not later than the same day, after an incident where Restrictive Intervention or use of force has been necessary. Parents/carers will need to be notified sensitively and to be made aware of the full circumstances. If a pupil is looked after, or under a child protection plan, the pupil's social worker will also be informed of the incident.

All parents will receive written information (using the template in Appendix iii of this policy) when their child has been restrained, including the approximate duration of the RPI and the degree of force used. The academy will always invite the parent in for a debrief meeting to review practice and update necessary documentation (described above).

Parents/carers will be informed of the academy's policy on positive handling and their behaviour policy.

Staff who work with particular children who have learning or physical disabilities (and who have Individual Education Plans, Individual Behaviour Plans and/or Pastoral Support Plans), may need to use specific techniques routinely to manage challenging behaviour. Such arrangements must be discussed with parents/carers in advance on an individual basis using PBSP / PIP. All interventions will be routinely recorded and monitored with the expectation that steps are taken to reduce the number of restrictive physical interventions year on year.

## Monitoring Incidents

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use reasonable force, this will be recorded and documented following agreed procedures described above. Monitoring of incidents helps us to analyse pupil behaviour over time so that we can see patterns and antecedents which can help us to support the pupil.

Monitoring of incidents will take place on a regular basis and the results used to inform planning to meet individual pupil and school needs. As a minimum, data will be analysed looking for patterns in terms of adults (e.g. job role), time of day, area and department of the school; demographics of pupils (e.g. FSM; Ethnicity; Gender; age; year group). Incidents should be monitored through Arbor and reported termly.

Ultimate responsibility for overseeing compliance with this policy resides with our Trust Board, which delegates operational management and oversight to Trust specialist staff. Trust specialist staff regularly interrogate RPI data to:

- Identify repeat patterns and triggers
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to protected characteristics, SEND status, or other vulnerabilities
- Ensure that school policies are adjusted where interventions are frequent but ineffective

Particular strategic oversight of these and other safeguarding arrangements are maintained by the Trust Board's appointed link trustee for safeguarding, and reported to the full Trust Board via established reporting mechanisms.

## Searching Pupils - Power to Search Pupils

Staff have the power to conduct a non-intimate search (i.e. instructing the pupil to empty pockets etc. and where only outer clothing is removed), and to search their lockers, bags or coats, with consent from the pupil themselves. The age and ability of the pupil should be taken into account. Parent / carer consent is not required and consent does not need to be in writing or formally recorded.

The Headteacher, and those authorised by the Headteacher, have the power to search without consent if they have reason to believe there may be "prohibited items" in the pupil's possession. This includes:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described in this policy, Headteachers and those authorised by the Headteacher can use reasonable force to conduct a search for these prohibited items, if a pupil refuses a search. Force cannot be used to search for other items banned under the school rules, only those detailed above which are prohibited by law. The trust notes that a vape is a banned item and therefore, force would not be used to search for vapes. If it is believed a pupil is carrying a prohibited item, under these circumstances, the Education Act 2011 extends the power of staff to search pupils without their consent. Where safe to do so, pupils will be offered the opportunity to have their parents/carers present. We will always carefully weigh up the likely risk of not searching a pupil, with the potential to cause the pupil distress. As with all restrictive intervention we always look for the minimum intervention. No intimate searches will ever take place in a Co-op Academy.

Wherever possible, searches will be carried out by two authorised members of staff, by staff members of the same gender as the pupil, and (in the case where lockers, desks and other personal spaces are searched) in the pupil's presence. Searches that require physical contact or use of force will always be a last resort and always carried out by a member of the same sex. The member of staff should consider whether conducting the search will prevent the pupil harming themselves or others, damaging property or from causing disorder. Where the risk is considered significant, they will be conducted by a trained member of staff of the same sex as the pupil, or, if possible, and preferably, by a family member. These preferences may not be possible depending on availability of staff in relation to the urgency of the situation and the potential harm that may be incurred by waiting.

A member of the leadership team or staff member (under the direction of the headteacher) will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it.

For further information the DfE have provided guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation. There are also more details on searching and screening in the Academy Behaviour Policy and guidance in the appendix of this policy.

## Medical and Mechanical Restraint

### Medication (Chemical Restraint)

Chemical restraint refers to the use of medication prescribed and administered by health professionals for the purpose of quickly controlling or subduing disturbed/aggressive behaviour and inappropriate prescription of substances for non-medical reasons, where it is not prescribed for the treatment of a formally identified physical or mental illness. It should be used only for a child or young person who is both (a) highly aroused, agitated, overactive, aggressive, is making serious threats towards others or themselves, or is being destructive to their surroundings, and (b) when other therapeutic or restrictive interventions have failed to contain the behaviour. An antipsychotic, an antidepressant, or both should not be prescribed in response to behaviour that challenges without an appropriate clinical reason.

Chemical restraint should only be used by health professionals as part of an agreed support plan and should be delivered in accordance with evidence-based best practice guidelines and by NHS based staff with the relevant qualifications, skills and experience to administer it.

Prescribers should provide information to those who provide care and support about any physical monitoring that may be required in addition to information about the medication to be used and how it should be administered (the route of medication).

We will work in partnership with people with a learning disability, autism or both, their

families, care teams, healthcare professionals, commissioners and others to avoid over medication.

## Mechanical Restraint

Mechanical restraint involves the use of a device to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of a person's body with the aim of controlling their behaviour. Examples of mechanical restraint may include: bed rails; tray tables; belts; harnesses; restrictive clothing; splints or gloves; the use of straps to restrain any part of the body; turning off a powered wheelchair.

Mechanical restraint may be used to manage extreme aggressive behaviour directed towards others or to limit self-injurious behaviour of extremely high frequency and intensity. This contingency is most notably encountered with small numbers of children and young people who have severe cognitive impairments, where devices such as arm splints or cushioned helmets may be required to safeguard them from the consequences of their behaviour. Any such devices should only be put in place by people with relevant training, qualifications, skill and experience. Wherever mechanical restraint is used as a planned contingency, it should be identified within a support plan which aims to obviate the need for its continued use.

We will work in partnership with people with a learning disability, autism or both, their families, care teams, healthcare professionals, commissioners and others to minimise the need for the continued use of mechanical restraint.

## Complaints and Allegations

A clear policy, that helps others to understand the purpose of restrictive intervention, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under the complaints, or disciplinary allegation management procedures. It is our intention to inform all staff, pupils, parents and governance volunteers about these procedures and the context in which they apply.

In the event of a complaint or allegation that a member of staff has used unreasonable force or where a child has been injured during a restrictive intervention, the Head teacher/Principal should in all circumstances undertake a consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in line with the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures and the Trust Managing Allegations procedures. In addition, trust deputy safeguarding leads and HR will also be informed.

For other types of complaints relating to an incident, the normal procedures of the trust will be used and these will be made clear to all parents/carers.

## Whistleblowing

Whilst the training in Team Teach provided to staff encourages the use of help protocols and reflective practice, it is acknowledged that under some circumstances, restrictive intervention can be misapplied. Staff are reminded that part of their Duty of Care to pupils includes the requirement to report any such matters which cause them concern in relation to pupil management and welfare. In line with the trust

Whistleblowing Policy, any such concerns should be raised with the Head teacher/Principal or other Senior Manager or the Regional Director to allow concerns to be addressed and practice improve.

## Key Legal References

This Positive Handling guidance is written with reference to the following legal concepts and documents:

- Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026);
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025;
- Offences Against the Persons Act 1861 (concepts of Assault, and Assault and Battery);
- Common Law concepts of false imprisonment and common law defence;
- Duty of Care;
- DfE Circular 10/98;
- The Children Act 1989;
- DoH/DfES Joint Guidance on Physical Interventions 2002;
- The Education Act 1996;
- Education and Inspection Act 2006;
- Screening, searching and confiscation – advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies.
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

## Appendix i

# Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP)

Please note that should the Pupil have a BIPRA in place, then a PBSP must be Completed: (Although a PBSP could be used as a stand-alone document to support pupils in learning with non-restrictive physical interventions being listed.)

School Name:		Date:	
Name of Head/Centre Manager:			
Pupil Name:		D.O.B:	
		School Year:	

Name of person completing this form:	
Name of person(s) contributing to this form:	

Medical Conditions: (Any medical or physical condition that could impact on the use of restrictive intervention.)

Has a BIPRA been completed?	Yes
-----------------------------	-----

<b>Primary Stage – Behaviours:</b> Lead up-Triggers, Worries, Escalators: (TWE) Describe common situations which staff have previously identified a need for further support and when these behaviours are likely to occur.
<b>Early Indicator Behaviour:</b> Early Indicators - How does pupil present? (Signs that identify the start of dysregulation and possible need for support).

DOs – suggestive strategies for de-escalation. This can include the pupil's interests, activities and resources that are useful.	DON'Ts – Actions which may escalate the pupil's behaviour further

<b>Secondary Stage - Behaviours:</b> Behaviours that indicate the pupil is escalating toward crisis level and strategies to keep the pupil and others safe.	
Behaviour:	
DOs – Suggestive strategies for de-escalation.	DON'Ts – Actions which may escalate the pupil's behaviour further

Behaviour:	
DOs – suggestive strategies for de-escalation.	DON'Ts – Actions which may escalate the pupil's behaviour further

**Tertiary Stage - restrictive intervention Strategies – Personal Safety**

Describe any strategies which have worked in the past or should be avoided unless appropriate risk is present. All restrictive physical interventions should where possible be performed by staff who have been trained in each particular technique listed.

Arm responses:	
Side-step in	Try
Cross step in	Try
Drop elbow	Try
Pump	Try
Conductor	Try
Clock	Try
Crossover	Try
Neck disengagement:	
Steering wheel	Try
Fix & stabilise	Try
Windmill	Try
Snake	Try
Elbow swing	Try
Neck Brace	Try
Bar & brace-behind	Try
Elbow guide out of headlock	Try
Spin out of strangle	Try
Prompts Guides & Separations:	
Prompt touch	Try
Caring C guide	Try
Steering away	Try
Arm waltz	Try
Turn gather guide	Try
Half shield	Try

Clothing responses:	
Closed fist hold	Try
Tube grip	Try
Close to neck	Try
From behind	Try
Hair responses:	
One handed grab	Try
Two handed grab	Try
Knuckle squeeze	Try
Bite responses:	
Eye bulge	Try
Jaw manual manipulation	Try

One Person Holds:	
Prompt touch	Try
Caring C guide	Try
Single person double elbow	Try
Small Child Supports:	
Caring C guide	Try
Caring C kneeling	Try
Kneeling double elbow	Try
Two-person friendly escort	Try
Beanbags to hold single person	Try
Bean bags to hold two person friendly	Try
Change of face in beanbag	Try
Help alongside beanbag	Try
Response to dead weight	Try
Two Person Holds:	
Friendly escort	Try
Single elbow	Try
Figure of four	Try
Double elbow	Try
Response to dead weight	Try
Response to spitting	Try
Responses to kicking	Try

### Restoration Stage:

It is best practice after an incident that a pupil receives support through restorative practice. This should take place after the incident when the pupil is regulated and able to engage.

### How should restorative practice be done?

Describe any strategies that have worked in the past. For example, how long should the child be left to calm before this happens, where should this take place, who should do the debrief? Etc...

Pupil voice – Where and how will this be recorded?					
<i>Pupil voice is recorded on the Trust RPI Google Form</i>					
Recording & Reporting – How will any RPI be recorded and where?					
<i>All RPI instances will be recorded on Arbor and the Trust RPI Google Form completed</i>					
Parent notified? How?					
SLT made aware? How?					
<i>All RPI instances will be recorded on Arbor and the Trust RPI Google Form completed</i>					

Signatures:					
School:		Name:		Date:	
SENCO:		Name:		Date:	
Parent/Carer		Name:		Date:	

## Appendix ii

### Searching and Screening Guidance for Schools

The DfE guidance for Searching, Screening and Confiscation is can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62d1643e8fa8f50bfbefa55c/Searching\\_Screening\\_and\\_Confiscation\\_guidance\\_July\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62d1643e8fa8f50bfbefa55c/Searching_Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf)

Some important points to consider outlined below. This guidance is for searching and confiscation. Following this a list of recommendations for our schools to ensure searching processes are lawful, robust and keep children safe.

#### Why it is so important to adhere to guidance:

Before screening or conducting a search of a pupil, it is vital that schools consider their obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. Under Article 8, *pupils have a right to respect for their private life*. In the context of these rights and obligations, pupils have the right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy. The right under Article 8 is not absolute; it can be interfered with, but any interference with this right by a school (or any public body) must be justified and proportionate. The powers to search in the Education Act 1996 are compatible with Article 8. *A school exercising those powers lawfully should have no difficulty in demonstrating that it has also acted in accordance with Article 8.*

#### Important points (summarised from the guidance):

- You can search for any of the PROHIBITED items (set by law) and any that are in the policy as BANNED items (set by the school). You can search a student if you think they are carrying something to cause harm or commit an offence (even if it is not in prohibited list - e.g. scissors, compass, phone). If you have reasonable evidence they are carrying these items with an intent to cause harm to themselves or others, they become 'prohibited'
- Vapes are NOT prohibited items. They should be listed as banned. Cigarettes/papers ARE prohibited
- Always ensure students understand the reason for the search and how it will be conducted (*so that their consent is informed - this is the law*). Give the opportunity for questions
- Before going straight to a search, it would normally be relevant to check CCTV. Consider reasonable grounds for a search and if there is potential for significant harm or if there is time for advice first
- Only the HT, and authorised staff, can search. The HT should specify what staff members are authorised to search for (e.g. some staff search for banned items, but only a few search for weapons)
- If a security guard is conducting a search it MUST adhere to guidance and be in the presence of school staff (in most cases, SLT or DSL)
- The headteacher should ensure staff conducting searches are appropriately trained
- The DSL should be informed if a search is deemed necessary for a PROHIBITED item
- A list of ALL searches carried out on children should be logged and kept (logged on Arbor)
- An appropriate (consistent) location should be decided for a search, away from other pupils
- The person searching a student must be THE SAME SEX as the student being searched
- There must be another member of staff present (preferably also same sex unless mitigating circumstances)
- The only mitigating circumstances to the above rule is:

- The staff member reasonably believes that waiting would cause serious harm (urgency)
- It is not possible to find two authorised members of staff of the same sex (exceptional)
- If a member of staff does breach the above (different sex / solo search) needs to be reported to the headteacher immediately and write a detailed record of the search.
- If a pupil refuses a search the staff member should:
  - Seek advice from DSL to consider reasons for refusal e.g. trauma; understanding; possession)
  - Sanction in line with school behaviour policy (if DSL deems appropriate)
  - If search still considered important (but not urgent) seek advice from DSL / Head / HoY
  - Assess the need to consider reasonable force (last resort and ONLY if the item is prohibited)
  - Reasonable force cannot be used for banned items and only trained staff members
  - Reasonable force should be a last resort where risk of the item outways risks from PH
  - Consult PH Policy if assessing that reasonable force is necessary
- A member of staff may search a student's outer clothing, pockets, possessions, desks or lockers
- Outer clothing: Any item of clothing that is not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear, as well as hats, shoes, boots or scarves.
- Personal items can be searched with consent and another member of staff and student present
- Without consent, if the item is a banned or prohibited item, consider if the search should go ahead
- Searches can be done with metal detectors / wands
- Students must NOT be patted down
- Schools are encouraged to include in the record of each search:
  - the date, time and location of the search;
  - which pupil was searched;
  - who conducted the search and any other adults or pupils present;
  - what was being searched for and the reason for searching;
  - what items, if any, were found;
  - what follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search.
- Parents should *always* be informed of any search for a *prohibited* item (and the outcome)
- Parents would *normally* be informed of any search for a *banned* item (unless reasons not to)

## Appendix iii

### Draft Letter to Parents/Carers

Subject: Notification of Restrictive Physical Intervention

Dear [Parent/Carer Name],

I am writing to inform you of an incident involving [Child's Name] that occurred today, [Date], at approximately [Time].

At [School Name], our primary concern is always the safety and well-being of our students and staff. Unfortunately, an incident occurred where it became necessary for staff to use a restrictive physical intervention to ensure the safety of [Child's Name] and/or others.

#### Summary of the Incident

- Location: [e.g., Classroom, Playground]
- The Trigger: [Briefly describe the preceding behavior, e.g., high levels of distress/danger to self].
- The Action: Staff used [mention the specific hold or intervention used, e.g., a guided escort] as a last resort when other de-escalation strategies were unsuccessful.

The intervention lasted for approximately [Number] minutes and was discontinued as soon as it was safe to do so.

#### Post-Incident Care

Following the incident, [Child's Name] was supported by [Staff Member Name] to help them regulate their emotions. A full check for any injuries was conducted; [State results, e.g., no injuries were sustained / a minor scratch was noted and treated by the first aider].

We understand that receiving this news can be upsetting. Please be assured that this action was taken only to prevent harm. We will be conducting a "debrief" with [Child's Name] at an age-appropriate level to help them understand what happened and how we can support them better in the future.

#### Next Steps

We would like to invite you to a meeting on [Date/Time] to discuss the incident in more detail and review [Child's Name]'s Positive Behaviour Support Plan/Behaviour Individual Pupil Risk Assessment.

If you have any immediate questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [Phone Number/Email].

Yours sincerely,

[Name] [Job Title/Headteacher]