



'To be the best we can be'.
The best learner, the best friend, the best citizen.



Positive Handling Policy

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Introduction

At The Island Learning Trust, we are as rigorous about relationships as we are about the overall quality of our provision. We hold Connection, Care and Nurture at the front and centre of all we do. Positive Handling (including the use of reasonable force and seclusion) is exceptional and used only as a last-resort safety measure within a culture that prioritises prevention, de-escalation, and restorative practice.

The Legal Framework

This Trust policy aligns with DfE guidance “Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools” and is effective from 1 April 2026. It sets a consistent, lawful, safe and transparent approach that each TILT school will personalise locally.

This policy incorporates the statutory duties issued under Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 relating to the recording and reporting of significant incidents involving the use of force.

Definitions

Restrictive intervention: any deliberate act that restricts a pupil’s movement, liberty, or freedom to act to prevent harm.

Reasonable force: the minimum degree of force necessary to achieve a legitimate safety aim.

Restraint: the use of force to restrict movement; may include non-force restraint (e.g., removal of an aid) where relevant in the DfE guidance.

Seclusion: a non-disciplinary, time-limited safety measure where a pupil is placed alone and prevented from leaving; used only to reduce immediate risk and never as a punishment or threat.

The term ‘positive handling’ includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. The term ‘Positive Handling’ is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. Within TILT schools, Positive Handling is commonly known within the community as a ‘hold’ not a physical restraint. A clear and consistent positive handling policy supports pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within an ethos of mutual respect, care and safety.

Before using physical controls, we take effective action to reduce risk by:

Showing care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiating and reasoning.

- Giving clear directions for pupils to stop
- Reminding them about rules and likely outcomes
- Removing an audience or taking vulnerable pupils to a safe place
- Making the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons
- Using positive guidance to escort pupils to somewhere less pressured
- Ensuring that colleagues know what is happening and call for help.

In addition, whilst or before intervention, staff should speak calmly as a way of reassurance e.g. I am doing this to keep you safe.

Why Use Positive Handling?

Positive handling should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm themselves. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which positive handling 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 school's Nurturing Relationships and Behaviour Policy particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in *loco parentis* and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and wellbeing.

Alternative Strategies

There are some situations in which the need for positive handling is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. is a pupil is about to run across a road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- an instruction is repeated until the pupil complies
- use of a distracter, to interrupt the behaviour long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high)
- the employment of other consequences consistent our Nurturing Relationship and Behaviour Policy.

When positive handling becomes necessary:

DO

- Make a dynamic risk assessment
- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary for the shortest duration
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible, e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil

- Attempt to reason with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Use intentional ground holds
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
- Staff must not under any circumstances use any technique that compromises breathing or circulation, including prone holds or chest compression.

Seclusion

Seclusion may only be used to reduce immediate risk when a pupil is acutely dysregulated and poses harm; it must be supervised, time-limited, risk-assessed, and ended as soon as safe. Seclusion must never be used as a disciplinary sanction or threatened as such.

Actions after an incident

Positive handling typically occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations, and there is a clear need for debriefing following any incident. Debriefing should take place with both the staff involved and the pupil, at an appropriate time. A member of the Senior Leadership Team must be informed of any incident as soon as possible.

Where a pupil's behaviour is part of an emerging or established pattern, it may be necessary to review or implement additional support measures. This may include a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP), Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP), updated risk assessment, or other strategies agreed in collaboration with parents/carers and relevant professionals.

Schools should also reflect on the circumstances leading to the incident to identify adjustments or preventative strategies that could reduce the likelihood of future occurrences.

A written record must be completed for every significant incident involving the use of force. This should be done on the same day where practicable.

Parents must be provided with written information about any incident involving force, seclusion, or restraint (including non-force restraint) as required. This should be shared as soon as practicable and ideally on the same day.

For all TILT schools, a record of the incident must be completed using the appropriate Trust template, and the incident must also be logged on MyConcern.

Records must capture, as a minimum: the date, time, location, and approximate duration of the incident; the reason the intervention was necessary; a brief description of the intervention including the type and degree of force used; de-escalation strategies attempted prior to the intervention; any injuries sustained and outcomes of medical checks; the pupil's SEND status and any relevant adjustments; staff involved; and who was notified and when.

Schools must store records securely in accordance with data protection requirements and Trust retention schedules.

Risk Assessments

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Management of the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary)
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take.
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate

Pupils with SEND and reasonable adjustments

We understand that pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Pupils who have difficulty communicating verbally might show their needs and discomfort through their actions.

Our school is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

We will carry out risk assessments for pupils with SEND, where we identify that there is an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. Our school is aware of its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities to avoid disadvantage and ensure they can take part in school life as fully as possible.

We will 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. We will also work with the pupil, their parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

These strategies might include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress to the pupil
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the pupil, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice
- Helping the pupil express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the pupil in activities to help them regulate their emotions
- Distracting the pupil with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, we will create individual behaviour support plans for pupils with SEND. The plan will be reviewed regularly, and following any significant incident, with the pupil and parents/carers to make sure it's still working well.

Complaints

Concerns or complaints will be managed under the Trust and school complaints and safeguarding procedures. Allegations against staff will be handled in line with KCSIE and Trust HR processes.

Governance, data and oversight

Heads of School will ensure robust systems are in place to record, analyse and learn from incidents. The Trustee's will receive regular reports, assure compliance, commission training and require improvement actions as needed.

Trustees must review patterns in restrictive intervention data to identify systemic issues, evaluate school culture, monitor the impact of training, and ensure preventative strategies are strengthened accordingly.

Roles and responsibilities

Head of School - implement this policy, ensure training, authorise staff, quality-assure records, report to Trustee's.

Designated Safeguarding Lead - ensure safeguarding oversight, triage where risk of harm, coordinate parental communication and multi-agency links.

SENDCo - coordinate reasonable adjustments and individual plans; review following incidents.

All staff - use de-escalation first; only use restrictive interventions when necessary and lawful; record and report promptly.

Governance - review data, challenge and support leadership, ensure policy alignment across behaviour, safeguarding and SEND.

Monitoring, review and publication

This policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis (or sooner if DfE updates). Ensure staff are briefed at induction and through regular refreshers, with training records being kept.