

## Positive Handling Policy (Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions)

### Mission Statement

WeST holds a deep-seated belief in education and lifelong learning. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the students and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life.

Person(s) responsible for updating the policy:	Richard Woodland, Director of Safeguarding
Date Approved:	July 2025
Date of next review:	July 2028

### WeST Core Values

WeST holds four core values which underpin the engagement, motivation and retention of employees, no matter what their role in the organisation.

- **Collaboration**  
Creating a shared vision and working effectively across boundaries in an equitable and inclusive way to skilfully influence and engage others. Building and securing value from relationships, developing self and others to achieve positive outcomes.
- **Aspiration**  
Having high expectations, modelling the delivery of high-quality outcomes. Showing passion, persistence and resilience in seeking creative solutions to strive for continuous improvement and excellence.
- **Integrity**  
Acting always with the interests of children and young people at our heart, and with a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles. Communicating with transparency and respect, creating a working environment based on trust and honesty.
- **Compassion**  
Recognising need in others and acting with positive intention to promote well-being and improve outcomes.

### Providing Accessible Formats

If you are unable to use this document and require it in a different format, please contact the Director of Safeguarding.

## Rationale

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff where the use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions may be required.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies relating to interactions between adults and pupils and other guidance. Specifically:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- DfE Guidance (Feb 2025) "[Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions in Schools](#)"

## Responsibilities

The Headteacher/Principal will ensure that staff are familiar with and correctly apply this policy. This policy will be reviewed every three years

## Policy Statement

Good professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that most pupils in WeST schools respond positively to the school's Behaviour Policy followed by staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances staff may need to take action in situations where the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, may be required. Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff at WeST schools:

- clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where restrictive interventions, including the use of 'reasonable force' (positive handling), is necessary and;
- are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur. The application of any form of restrictive intervention places staff in a vulnerable situation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible to prevent the need for restrictive interventions.

Positive handling (use of 'reasonable force') will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed; when pupils or staff are at risk, or there is a risk of significant damage to property.

## Definitions:

- **Physical contact situations:** in which appropriate physical contact takes place between staff and pupils, e.g. in games/PE or to comfort pupils.
- **Physical intervention:** this may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.
- **Positive handling:** this will involve the use of 'reasonable force' when there is a risk to pupils, staff or of significant damage to property. All such incidents **must** be recorded on the CPOMs system using the category, "Restrictive Intervention: physical restraint"
- **Reasonable force:** Physical contact by a member of staff on a pupil to control or restrain their actions/movements. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances. Any use of reasonable force is an example of a restrictive intervention and may or may not involve the use of restraint.
- **Restraint:** A form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact and force where the intention is to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. Restraint may also include mechanical or chemical restraint. Restraint may or may not involve the use of force.
- **Restrictive interventions:** Any planned or reactive action which limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. Restrictive interventions may include use of equipment, medication or seclusion (i.e.

where a pupil is isolated in a room under supervision). Restrictive interventions may or may not involve the use of 'reasonable force'.

### **Underpinning Values**

Everyone attending or working at WeST has the right to:

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

Pupils attending WeST schools and their parents<sup>1</sup> have a right to:

- individual consideration of pupils needs by the staff with responsibility for their care and protection
- expect staff to undertake duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies
- be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in the school
- be informed about the school's complaint procedure

WeST schools will ensure that pupils understand the need for and respond to clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in the school, as set out in the school's Behaviour Policy.

Parents should have committed themselves, through the Home-School Agreement, to ensure the good behaviour of their child and that their child understands and follows the school's Behaviour Policy.

### **Training**

All school staff who are authorised to be in charge of pupils are automatically authorised to use 'reasonable force' where necessary, as described in [DfE Guidance](#). WeST recognises that adults have a duty of care to act in the best interests of the children. Staff should use their own judgement and assess the risks before acting. Staff should take care to avoid injury to themselves. Positive Handling training will be made available to designated staff and this will be the responsibility of the Headteacher. Prior to the provision of training, guidance will be given on action to be taken.

### **Strategies for dealing with behaviour that challenges others**

Staff should understand that children with special educational needs, or other vulnerabilities, may exhibit behaviours that are a manifestation of an unmet need. Staff should ask themselves, "*What is this behaviour communicating?*" when dealing with dysregulated pupils. WeST recognises its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, and those in respect of safeguarding and supporting pupils with special educational needs. As a trust, we are keen to ensure that we do not discriminate through the application of our school behaviour policies against pupils whose apparent inappropriate behaviour may be a function of SEND needs or other protected characteristics.

Staff should consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively. Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and provokes intervention, some or all of the following approaches will be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

- Verbal acknowledgment of unacceptable behaviour with request for the pupil to refrain and, if appropriate, move to a designated safe space; this involves negotiation, care and concern.
- Further verbal warning stating:
  - this is the second request for compliance
  - an explanation of why the observed behaviour is unacceptable
  - an explanation of the consequences and what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues
- Warning of potential need to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies.

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<sup>1</sup> Where the text uses the word "parent", it should be read as inclusive of carers and any other person who has parental responsibility  
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- If possible, summoning assistance. It must be remembered that a physical restraint, if required, is a safeguard, not a sanction. The child should be told that the reason for positive handling is to protect them not to punish them. At this point, it may be necessary to remove other children from the scene for their own protection.
- Physical intervention. Reasonable physical intervention using the minimum degree of contact to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property.
- Positive handling (the use of 'reasonable force') to ensure the safety of the pupil, other people or property.

WeST recognises that children in a state of dysregulation, especially those who have suffered trauma, may not be able to process the verbal and non-verbal cues from adults during periods of distress. Staff should always act in a calm and consistent manner and verbalise their intentions anyway as this indicates to other staff and pupils what is happening.

### **Use of 'Reasonable Force'**

This section should be read alongside the DfE Guidance (Feb 2025) "[Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions in Schools](#)"

All members of school staff have a legal power to use 'reasonable force'. This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the Headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit. 'Reasonable force' can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.

The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. It should be proportionate, legal, accountable, necessary and reasonable.

### **Acceptable measures of Positive Handling (use of 'reasonable force').**

Positive handling can only be deemed reasonable if:

- it is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident
- it is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is desired to prevent
- it is carried out as the minimum to achieve the desired result
- the individual needs of the pupil are taken into account
- it is likely to achieve the desired result

If the use of positive handling can be anticipated wherever possible assistance should be sought from another member of staff before 'reasonable force' is used.

Following the incident, the child (if possible) should be spoken to, once calm, and encouraged to reflect on their actions.

### **Recording**

Where positive handling (i.e. 'reasonable force') has been used a record of the incident **must** always needs to be kept. All recording needs to be completed on the day of incident and needs to include the following:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate length of time the intervention was used
- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or
- potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of physical injuries sustained, if applicable

- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

This **must** be recorded on the school's CPOMS system using the category, "Restrictive Intervention: physical restraint" WeST schools should use the recommended bespoke incident template for this category to facilitate accurate recording of each incident as outlined in the bullet points above.

### **Informing Parents**

Parents **must** always be informed, as soon as practicable, following an incident where 'reasonable force' has been used. It is good practice for parents to be informed of any incident involving restrictive interventions, even when 'reasonable force' is not used.

As a minimum the report to parents should include the following:

- time, date, location and approximate length of time the force was used
- brief account of what type of reasonable force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary

This requirement to report applies even if the use of reasonable force in certain circumstances has been agreed in advance as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Following an incident of restrictive intervention a discussion should take place involving parents and relevant members of staff (e.g. SLT, SENCO, class teacher) to put appropriate measures in place to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

### **Action after an Incident**

The Headteacher (or SLT in their absence) 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:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Procedure

Members of staff will be kept informed of any action taken.

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

### **Complaints**

The availability of a clear policy regarding the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Any complaints about staff will be dealt with under the WeST Complaints Procedure.

### **Monitoring of Incidents**

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use a restrictive intervention, this must be recorded on the school's CPOMS system using the parent category, "Restrictive Intervention" and the appropriate sub-category. The Headteacher/Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead should review the number of incidents requiring restrictive intervention on a termly basis. This process should address patterns of incidents and evaluate trends which may be emerging. Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Headteacher/Principal to the needs of any pupil(s) whose behaviour has repeatedly required the

use of positive handling. Where the Headteacher identifies any concerns, this should be raised with the Director of Safeguarding or relevant Director of Education.

Trustees, through the Education Standards Committee, will have oversight of the number and type of restrictive interventions used across WeST schools via regular reports from the Director of Safeguarding.

#### Version History

Date	Notes
December 2022	New policy for WeST schools
July 2025	Policy updated to reflect changes to DfE guidance (February 2025) Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions in Schools, including updated definitions and details of how WeST schools will meet the statutory reporting duty introduced from September 2025.