



ILSA Southchurch & Westcliff

Positive Handling Policy for Students with Physical Needs

Version	Approved by:	Reviewed
001		Annually
Sent to HR & SW on:		
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Purpose

This Positive Handling Policy is written following the guidance from the Department for Education's on the "Use of Reasonable Force 2013" and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Guidance: *Positive and Proactive Care: Reducing the Need for Restrictive Interventions* (2014), which emphasises reducing reliance on restrictive practices through proactive and therapeutic approaches.

The aim of the staff at ILSA Southchurch and Westcliff is to provide an environment that is safe and secure through a 'whole college approach' to behaviour, that promotes proactive and therapeutic strategies to minimise the need for physical intervention while ensuring the safety and dignity of everyone in the college community. Positive handling will only be used as a last resort and must adhere to the principles of therapeutic thinking, prioritising de-escalation, emotional regulation, and restoration.

However, where a student is at risk of harming themselves, their peers or staff, disrupts the teaching and learning environment or a college event/visit or where a search for "prohibited items" is necessary, staff may be required to positively handle students. All staff will ensure that any use of force is reasonable, proportionate and necessary to ensure the safety of all those concerned is paramount.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables college staff to use "such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a student from doing or continuing to do" any of the following:

- committing any offence,
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the student himself), or
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the college or among any students receiving education at the college, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Policy Statement

The term 'physical restraint' is used when force is applied as a means to control a student's behaviour. Physical intervention occurs when a member of staff, intentionally using force, physically restricts a student's movement against their will. All staff members recognise that the use of reasonable force is a last resort used only to prevent immediate risk of harm, significant damage to property, or severe disruption to learning. It is an expectation that other strategies are used first to de-escalate a student who is displaying either unsafe behaviour or is at risk of jeopardising the good order and discipline within the college.

Part of our preventative approach to risk management involves a therapeutic approach which is critical to understanding and addressing the causes of challenging behaviour, minimising the need for physical intervention.

The Therapeutic Thinking approach emphasises:

- **Empathy and Understanding:** Behaviours often communicate unmet emotional, sensory, or social needs.
- **Proactive Prevention:** Identifying and addressing triggers through individualised Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs).
- **De-escalation Techniques:** Prioritising verbal and non-verbal strategies to calm and reassure learners.
- **Restorative Practices:** Rebuilding trust and relationships after incidents through structured restorative processes.

Positive Handling Procedures

Before considering positive handling, staff must employ de-escalation techniques, such as:

- Maintaining a calm tone of voice and non-threatening body language.
- Giving learners space and time to self-regulate.
- Ask the students to stop.
- Offering choices and redirecting learners to safe, calming activities.
- Reminding learners of successful regulation strategies from their BSPs.
- Remind the student of possible consequences.

Positive handling must never be used as punishment or to enforce compliance. Any use of positive handling must be proportionate, reasonable, and in the best interests of the student. If positive handling is required staff will:

- Withdraw the use of physical intervention at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensure both staff and student's involved are supported emotionally following the incident (this could also involve medical assistance as required).
- Ensure a debrief is given to both staff and students following the restraint at the earliest opportunity.
- Record as soon as possible using an incident form and positive handling form and in the bound positive handling book.
- Inform the parent/carer.

Incident Management

Whenever possible, more than one staff member should be present to ensure safety. Staff must clearly explain actions to the learner, offering opportunities to de-escalate and the minimum amount of force necessary will be used to prevent harm.

Following an incident and once a student is calm, staff will discuss the incident with the student to rebuild trust and help them process the experience. This debrief process provides the reflection and support required to all individuals involved in the incident.

All incidents of positive handling will be recorded in the Behaviour Log and Incident Report and staff will then update the student's BSP based on lessons learned from the incident. Records include details such as:

- The behaviour leading to intervention.
- De-escalation techniques used.
- The positive handling applied (type, duration, staff involved).
- Outcomes and follow-up actions
- Inform parents/carers and relevant professionals promptly.

Students will be supported in acknowledging the emotional outburst; how this affects others and the strategies that will be put in place to help them manage this negative behaviour. If the need for physical intervention is required a risk assessment and Behaviour Intervention and Positive Handling Plan will be drawn up to identify possible antecedents and triggers to provide a clear and consistent means of managing the student's behaviour effectively. These will be reviewed each term involving staff, parents and the student.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with special educational needs and disabilities in line with our legal responsibilities relating to the SEND Code of Practice (January 2015).

Reporting and Recording

All incidents of positive handling must be recorded and monitored. Staff are required to report to SLT if the use of physical force has been required. A bound book is held in the Head of Colleges office and must be completed at the earliest opportunity following the physical intervention. A detailed incident form and positive handling form will need to be completed (see appendices). The records are then read by a member of SLT and held in the serious incidents folder. The positive handling form is signed and held in the Positive Handling Folder, which is monitored termly.

Parents/carers will be informed as soon as possible if it has been necessary to positively handle their student.

Staff Responsibilities and Training

At ILSA Southchurch and Westcliff we have adopted the Therapeutic Thinking model of training on the use of de-escalation strategies to diffuse situations and the use of positive handling.

All staff must:

- Be trained in de-escalation strategies and positive handling techniques aligned with therapeutic thinking principles.
- Follow the guidance outlined in this policy and individual BSPs.
- Prioritise the safety, dignity, and rights of all learners during any intervention.

Therapeutic Thinking training courses have all been fully endorsed by Essex Special Schools Education Trust (ESSET) in accordance with DFE and Department of Health guidance. All staff are trained in the use of de-escalation techniques and SLT, SEND and the inclusion teams are all Therapeutic Thinking trained.

The college Principle will keep a record of all staff who are Therapeutic Thinking trained and ensure that all training is kept up to date in line with Therapeutic Thinking guidelines.

Complaints

In the event that an allegation is made against a member of staff, either by a parent/carer or another member of staff it will be investigated following the college complaints and safeguarding procedures. The staff member will be provided with pastoral support from SLT following the allegation.

The DFE Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force 2013 states:

- When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably.
- Suspension must not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force. Colleges should refer to the “Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff” guidance (see the ‘Further sources of information’ section below) where an allegation of using excessive force is made against a teacher. This guidance makes clear that a person must not be suspended automatically, or without careful thought.
- Should a member of staff be a victim of physical violence or assault they have the right to make a formal complaint to the police, or take private action as appropriate against the student concerned.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All incidents of positive handling must be recorded and monitored. Staff are required to report to SLT if the use of physical force has been required. A bound book is held in the managers office and must be completed at the earliest opportunity following the physical intervention. A detailed incident form and positive handling form will need to be completed (see appendices). The records are then read by a member of SLT/CLT and held in the students serious incidents folder and uploaded to Safeguard. The positive handling form is signed and held in the Positive Handling Folder, which is monitored termly.

Parents/carers will be informed as soon as possible if it has been necessary to positively handle their student.

Behaviour data will be reviewed regularly to monitor the frequency and outcomes of positive handling incidents. Feedback from learners, families, and staff will inform evaluations of the policy's effectiveness. The college will refine and improve this policy continually to reflect best practices and emerging research.

Related Legislation and Guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Department for Education (DfE) Guidance: *Use of Reasonable Force in Colleges*.
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) Guidance: *Positive and Proactive Care: Reducing the Need for Restrictive Interventions*.
- Student Positive Behaviour Policy.
- Safeguarding Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- SEND Code of Practice (Children and Families Act 2014).

This Positive Handling Policy demonstrates the college's commitment to therapeutic thinking, prioritising safety, dignity, and fostering a supportive, inclusive learning environment.