

Positive Handling Policy

April 2026

Leverhulme Academy Trust

Positive Handling: This Is How We Do It Here

Statement of Intent

At Leverhulme we strive to create an environment in which children and adults feel happy, safe, secure and valued. We aim to ensure a whole-school approach to behaviour, safeguarding and inclusion that is understood by all staff, pupils, parents/carers and external agencies.

The Trust is committed to creating a calm, respectful and supportive environment in which restrictive interventions are minimised through positive relationships, effective communication, reasonable adjustments, early intervention and de-escalation strategies.

There may be times when school staff are required to physically intervene with students in a way outside of the usual appropriate contact. These significant incidents are a serious matter, and will only be used as a last resort where it is lawful, proportionate, reasonable and necessary. The Governing Body recognises its duty to support staff who act appropriately and lawfully in accordance with this policy and current government guidance.

This policy is designed to:

- safeguard the welfare, dignity and rights of pupils and staff;
- reduce the risk of harm to pupils, staff and others;
- ensure restrictive interventions are used only when necessary and for the shortest possible time;
- promote preventative and de-escalation approaches;
- ensure incidents are appropriately recorded, reported and reviewed;
- support compliance with statutory guidance and safeguarding expectations.
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This policy should be read alongside each schools'...

- Behaviour & Rewards Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct.

This policy is based on:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (DfE, effective from 1 April 2026);
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998.

The Legal Framework

Under Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, school staff may use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- injuring themselves or others;
- committing a criminal offence;
- damaging property;
- seriously prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline.

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force where necessary and lawful. This includes teachers and other staff authorised by the Headteacher. The lawful use of reasonable force provides staff with a defence against criminal prosecution or other legal action.

Staff should only use restrictive interventions when:

- there is no safer practical alternative;
- the risks of not intervening outweigh the risks of intervening;
- the intervention is proportionate to the circumstances;
- the intervention is used for the shortest possible time.

Staff Training and Support

The school will ensure that all staff receive training in their safeguarding responsibilities, positive behaviour support and de-escalation strategies. Certain staff, as identified by the Head of School/Headteacher, will be trained in safe and lawful restrictive intervention techniques and recording and reporting procedures. This training will be refreshed regularly.

Only trained staff should use restrictive physical interventions wherever possible. However, all staff retain the legal power to use reasonable force in an emergency. Staff involved in incidents will receive appropriate support and debriefing following incidents as outlined below.

Definitions

Restrictive Intervention

A restrictive intervention is any intentional intervention that restricts a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. Restrictive interventions must only be used when lawful, proportionate, necessary and in the best interests of safety. They may include one or more of the following:

- physical restraint or reasonable force;
- physically guiding or blocking a pupil;
- restricting access to an area or item;
- seclusion.

Reasonable Force

Reasonable force covers a broad range of actions involving physical contact with pupils. The degree of force used must be the minimum necessary and applied for the shortest possible time. Reasonable force may be used to:

- prevent a pupil from injuring themselves or others;
- prevent serious damage to property;
- prevent the commission of a criminal offence;
- maintain good order and discipline where behaviour seriously disrupts the safe running of the school.

Seclusion

Seclusion refers to intentionally preventing a pupil from leaving a room or area where they are alone. Seclusion must never be used as a punishment. Any use of seclusion must be lawful, proportionate, necessary, supervised and recorded in accordance with statutory guidance.

Positive Handling

Positive handling refers to supportive strategies used to calm, guide or redirect pupils safely and respectfully, with an emphasis on communication, de-escalation and relationship-based practice.

In all instances, staff at Leverhulme will prioritise prevention, de-escalation and relational approaches. Restrictive and physical interventions will only be used as a last resort and will occur for the shortest period of time necessary. All incidents will be recorded, reported and reviewed and Trust staff will work openly and collaboratively with all stakeholders in light of the use of the above.

Prevention and De-escalation

Leverhulme staff recognise that restrictive interventions are less likely to be required where there is a strong culture of inclusion, support and early intervention.

Staff will:

- build positive and respectful relationships with pupils;
- use calm and consistent behaviour management approaches;
- provide clear routines, expectations and boundaries;
- make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND and additional needs;
- identify triggers and early warning signs;
- use trauma-informed and relational approaches;
- use de-escalation strategies including distraction, reassurance, humour, negotiation, offering choices, sensory regulation and reducing demands where appropriate;
- seek support from colleagues and senior leaders at an early stage.

Where appropriate, individual plans may be developed for pupils who are assessed as being at increased risk of requiring restrictive intervention. At Leverhulme, these will take the form of a Risk Management Plan and will be co-created alongside families. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or equivalent may have a specific approach outlined in this document and this will be adopted as part of the approach with this child.

Plans will:

- identify known triggers and behaviours;
- outline preventative and de-escalation strategies;
- identify preferred communication approaches;
- detail agreed responses if behaviour escalates;
- identify any agreed restrictive interventions;
- be shared with relevant staff and parents/carers;
- be reviewed regularly.

Pupils with SEND and Additional Needs

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and disabilities may be more vulnerable to the use of restrictive interventions. Staff must consider:

- communication needs;
- sensory needs;
- medical conditions;
- trauma experiences;
- developmental stage;
- disability discrimination duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Reasonable adjustments must be made to reduce the likelihood of distress and escalation. The school will work collaboratively with parents/carers and relevant professionals to identify supportive and preventative approaches.

Use of Restrictive Interventions

Where restrictive intervention is necessary, staff must:

- remain calm and seek to de-escalate throughout;
- communicate clearly with the pupil;
- use the minimum force necessary;
- avoid causing pain or restricting breathing;
- avoid holds around the neck or techniques that could impair breathing;
- continually assess the wellbeing of the pupil;
- stop the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so;
- request assistance where possible.

Staff must never:

- use force as a punishment;
- deliberately inflict pain;
- use degrading or humiliating treatment;
- use excessive force;
- use interventions that restrict breathing;
- use seclusion as a disciplinary sanction.

Where possible, another member of staff should be present to support, observe and assist.

Use of Seclusion

The Trust does not support the routine use of seclusion. Any use of seclusion must:

- only occur where absolutely necessary to prevent serious harm;
- be proportionate and lawful;
- be continuously monitored by staff;
- last for the shortest possible time;
- never be used as punishment or for staff convenience;
- be recorded and reported in line with statutory requirements.

Where a pupil is secluded:

- the pupil's welfare must be continuously monitored;
- the environment must be safe and suitable;
- staff must seek to end the seclusion as quickly as possible through de-escalation and support.

Recording and Reporting Incidents

In line with statutory guidance effective from 1 April 2026, all significant incidents involving the use of force or seclusion must be recorded and reported. Immediately following an incident, the member of staff involved must inform the relevant senior leader with oversight of this area:

Harper Green School	Joanne Unsworth
Lostock Primary School	Hannah Barnes Gray
Rivington & Blackrod High School and Sixth Form	Andrew Tipney

A written record must be completed as soon as possible, using Appendix 1 outlined below in this policy. Records will be reviewed by senior leaders to:

- monitor patterns and trends;
- identify opportunities for early intervention;
- evaluate the effectiveness of behaviour support plans;
- identify training or support needs;
- support safeguarding and wellbeing.

This written record will be saved on file and uploaded to the child's CPOMs account as an incident log.

Post-Incident Support and Debrief

Following an incident:

- medical assistance will be sought where required;
- the pupil will be supported to recover emotionally and physically;
- staff involved will have access to support and debriefing;
- restorative approaches will be considered where appropriate;
- plans and risk assessments will be reviewed where necessary.

The school will seek to learn from incidents to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Communication with Parents & Carers

Parents/carers will be informed of significant incidents involving restrictive intervention as soon as reasonably practicable. This will take place in a variety of ways and a follow up letter will follow via the school's communication module, for record retention (see Appendix 2 for details and structure of this communication).

Complaints and Allegations

Complaints or allegations relating to restrictive interventions will be taken seriously and investigated in accordance with the school's complaints, safeguarding and staff conduct procedures. Where staff have acted lawfully, reasonably and in accordance with this policy and statutory guidance, the school will provide appropriate support. Suspension of staff will not be an automatic response to allegations involving the use of reasonable force.

Monitoring and Review

This implementation of this policy, as well as its subsequent review, will be reviewed by Senior Leaders. This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation or guidance.

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Appendix 1 – Record of Incident Involving Physical Intervention or Seclusion

Physical Intervention / Restrictive Intervention Record

School:

Date:

Pupil Name	
Form/Class	

Staff Member Completing Record:	
Those Present and Role:	
Date of Incident:	
Location of Incident:	
Time of Incident:	

Describe the events, behaviours and triggers leading up to the incident

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Please Tick and/or describe strategies used prior to physical intervention.

- ☐ Verbal reassurance
- ☐ Reminder of expectations
- ☐ Distraction / diversion
- ☐ Offering choices
- ☐ Time and space
- ☐ Reduced audience
- ☐ Sensory regulation strategy
- ☐ Change of activity
- ☐ Support from familiar adult/change of face
- ☐ Restorative conversation
- ☐ Other _____

Reason for Physical / Restrictive Intervention

- ☐ Prevent pupil from injuring themselves
- ☐ Prevent pupil from injuring others
- ☐ Prevent serious damage to property
- ☐ Prevent the commission of a criminal offence
- ☐ Maintain good order and discipline where behaviour may seriously disrupt the safe running of the school.

Details of Restrictive Intervention Used

Describe the intervention used, including who was involved, the type of intervention, how long the intervention lasted, and how the pupil responded.

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Where there any injuries or medical concerns for any staff or student involved?

Pupil	Staff
☐ No injuries noted ☐ Injury observed ☐ First aid required ☐ Medical attention required Details:	☐ No injuries noted ☐ Injury observed ☐ First aid required ☐ Medical attention required Details:

Communication with Parents / Carers

Contact made by:	
Date/time of contact:	
Method of contact:	
Summary of discussion:	

Follow Up Actions Required

- ☐ Debrief with pupil
- ☐ Debrief with staff
- ☐ Risk assessment review
- ☐ Positive handling plan updated
- ☐ Behaviour support plan reviewed
- ☐ Safeguarding referral
- ☐ SEND review
- ☐ External agency involvement
- ☐ Medical follow-up
- ☐ Restorative meeting

Signed:

Date:

The following section of the report should be completed after the event, between a senior leader and the person responsible for the physical intervention

Reflection and Evaluation

On reflection, could this incident have been handled differently to prevent the need for physical intervention?

What could help prevent recurrence? Were there any lessons learned?

Signed (Intervening Member of Staff):

Date:

Signed (Reviewing Member of Staff):

Date:

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Appendix 2 – Communication with Parents & Carers

Dear Parent/Carer,

Further to our conversation, as part of our physical intervention procedures, it was necessary to use physical intervention with your child. Here are the details:

Date, time and location of the incident	<i>Insert the date, time and location of the incident</i>
Details of the incident	<i>Give a brief description of the incident, including the type of physical intervention used and why it was a reasonable, proportionate and necessary response. Use clear, factual language and avoid any emotive statements.</i>

Whilst this incident has already been discussed with you, we would like to discuss this incident formally with you and your child, so as to minimise the potential for this need to occur again in the future. If not already arranged, please get in touch to let us know when you would be available to meet and discuss the incident with a relevant member of staff.

Please be assured that your child's wellbeing and safety remain our highest priority and physical interventions are only used as a last resort to keep everyone safe. We will continue to take every possible step to support and safeguard them, while responding to challenging behaviour in a way that is respectful, proportionate, and focused on helping them feel safe and understood. You can read more about our approach to physical intervention by reading our Positive Handling Policy, available via our website.

Yours faithfully,