Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

Ocean Academy

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Apr 2026	Updated in line with DfE statutory guidance
Dec 2024	Additional text added to sections 6 and 8. Section on pupils with SEND added Reporting form replaced
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May 2020	New Policy

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1. Policy Statement

It is recognised that the vast majority of pupils in our Academy respond positively to our behaviour expectations. The well-being, welfare and safety of all pupils and staff at Ocean Academy is of paramount importance.

It is acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required.

Ocean Academy acknowledges that physical techniques are only part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management. Positive Handling will only be used as **a last resort** when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when pupils or staff are at risk.

Ocean Academy does not support the routine use of physical interventions.

All staff at understand that the Academy cannot use force as a punishment; it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

Positive Handling uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil from harming themselves or others.

The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be **proportionate** to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause to themselves, others or property.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in this Academy:

1. clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary
2. are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations.

2. Definitions

Restrictive intervention: An action or measure used to prevent, limit, or control the movement of a pupil's body, or part of their body. Within this policy, *restrictive intervention* is used as an umbrella term encompassing both physical and non-physical interventions intended to restrict a pupil's movement or behaviour.

Reasonable force: A legal term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the statutory power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable force refers to the minimum level of force necessary, applied for the shortest possible duration, and proportionate to the specific circumstances of the incident.

Significant incident: Any incident in which the use of force exceeds appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes situations where physical force is used to carry out or support a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention involving the confinement of a pupil to a space away from others, with their freedom to leave restricted. This may be achieved through physical obstruction, blocking exits, or actions that lead the pupil to believe they will face negative consequences if they attempt to leave.

Restraint: A term used in legislation to describe a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or restricts their movement. Restraint may involve direct physical contact or indirect actions. Examples include holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing an item that enables mobility, such as crutches.

3. Different types of physical contact with pupils

Situations in which proper appropriate physical contact occurs between staff and pupil.

Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary include**:**

a. holding the hand of a young child at the front/back of the line;

b. when comforting a distressed pupil;

c. when a pupil is being congratulated or praised;

d. to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;

e. to demonstrate exercise or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching;

f. to administer first aid.

g. to provide intimate care (see Intimate Care Policy)

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 arm or shoulder where the pupil is compliant.

Physical Control/Restraint

This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property.

- It is important to note that the use of "reasonable force" should be seen as a last resort.

- All such incidents must be recorded in writing and be stored in an accessible way (see Appendix 3).

- If at all possible, more than one member of staff should be present if physical restraint is necessitated.

- The level of compliance from the pupil determines whether or not the interaction is an intervention or a control/restraint.

Reasonable force will only be used in situations where it is needed to stop a pupil from causing harm to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property, or causing disorder among pupils. Any reasonable force used in situations that are non-urgent will only be used once all alternative options have been exhausted and where the staff member in charge deems that the situation is escalating.

The school understands that, in some cases, action may be required very quickly, e.g. in the event that a pupil attempts to run out into a busy road, or where pupils begin a violent fight with one another and staff are forced to pull the pupils apart. Staff will not be penalised for resorting to the use of physical intervention or reasonable force in such situations where it is justified and perceived necessary to prevent harm to others or property in the circumstances.

Positive handling will be applied with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. Reasonable force is not used as a method of behaviour management or discipline – only as a last resort in situations that require de-escalation to prevent harm.

4. Avoiding physical intervention and reducing risk

Staff will assess whether the incident requiring a response can be resolved without physical intervention.

Where possible, we implement an approach of prevention, where staff are trained in recognising warning signs of severe pain or distress and/or aggressive behaviour, communicating empathetically with pupils displaying such signs to aid them in regulating their emotions, and altering their environment to minimise distressing stimuli.

Teaching staff are aware of the behavioural patterns, medical conditions and levels of need of pupils in their class, and will ensure that incidents of disruptive or aggressive behaviour in the classroom are handled in line with individual pupils' needs.

Staff will not generally resort to physical contact or reasonable force immediately without first questioning whether there is a need to use physical intervention. Staff will question whether:

- **It is necessary:**
    - Staff will consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
    - Staff will assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
    - Where possible, staff will communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.
- **It is proportionate:**
    - Staff will use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce relevant risks.
    - If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff will reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
    - Staff will consider the personal circumstances of the pupil, e.g. medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics, e.g. age and size, and relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.
- **The pupil's welfare:**

- Staff will consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken.
- Staff will maintain respect for a pupil's dignity.
- Where possible, staff will clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- For pupils with communication difficulties or EAL, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies will be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff will seek to understand the pupil's feelings and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

5. Seclusion

The school recognises seclusion as a non-disciplinary measure that may be used, in exceptional circumstances, to reduce risk and avoid the need for physical intervention when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and is not acting with intent.

The school will ensure that seclusion is used only as a safety measure to protect the pupil, or others, from harm and will not use seclusion as a consequence or through the threat of punishment.

Where seclusion is used, we will ensure that:

- The space used will be safe, suitable, and not intimidating or threatening to the pupil.
- The pupil will be appropriately supervised at all times.
- The restriction will last only for as long as the immediate risk of harm remains.
- The pupil will be allowed to leave as soon as it is safe to do so.

The school will record and report any incident involving seclusion in accordance with the procedures set out in the **recording and reporting incidents** section of this policy.

Seclusion will not be used as a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. The school will use appropriate disciplinary measures, such as removal from the classroom, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

6. Pupils with SEND

At Ocean Academy, we have due consideration to how pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Staff members are trained on understanding triggers and how pupils that find communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions.

We seek to minimise the potential disproportionate use of restrictive interventions used on pupils with SEND by understanding underlying triggers of challenging behaviour and providing proactive support.

The SENCO will ensure that the stipulations of the Equality Act 2010 are adhered to in relation to reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and will ensure that staff that come into regular contact with pupils with SEND are aware of the ways in which their needs can be met without reasonable force.

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. The school will also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

De-escalation strategies may include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress.
- Changing body language, facial expression, or tone of voice.
- Supporting the pupil to express their emotions before they become overwhelmed.
- Engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety.
- Distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention.

Staff members will not assume that a technique employed for one pupil with SEND will be applicable to other pupils with SEND.

Where appropriate, staff will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of behaviour support plans. These plans will outline any adjustments and methods to communicate their needs effectively. Behaviour support plans will also detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. Any behaviour support plan will be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident.

Where there is an identified risk, e.g. an increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and other physical interventions, the school will put risk assessments in place and mitigate these risks through training and prevention strategies.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy at all times.

7. Authorised staff

Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 permits adults who have lawful charge or control of children to use reasonable force to control or restrain them. These include:

a. teachers

b. family support workers

c. teaching assistants

d. representatives from outside agencies

e. other adults who may be working with children either on Academy premises or accompanying them on out of Academy activities, e.g. during field trips or on journeys.

Wherever possible Physical Restraint should only be used by those with appropriate training. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible and physical restraint may be used as an emergency measure by someone without appropriate training to ensure the safety of children in their care. Any physical intervention should be conducted making reasonable adjustment for students with SEN or disabilities. The child's Plan will take this into account. In this instance, someone with appropriate training should be called for immediately.

8. Post Incident Support

We will evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and

staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in the future.

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible

Follow-up conversations will be used to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. Such conversations will be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and seek to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved. This process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident, with input from an additional person to ensure impartiality and support.

The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed. Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

9. Recording and Reporting of Incidents

a. Ocean Academy keeps a written record of all restrictive intervention incidents. Where a significant incident has occurred and force has been used, even if agreed as part of a pupil's Behaviour Support Plan, the Physical Intervention Report form in appendix 3 must be completed. The record should be completed by the end of the working day on which the incident took place ***and uploaded to the MyConcern platform under the category of Restraint.***

b. A member of the Leadership Team will be told at the earliest possible time after an incident.

c. Parents/carers will be informed **in writing (email/Arbor message) and by telephone.** The report of the incident will include the following details:

-The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.

-A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary.

-A brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force.

-The details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

d. A member of the Leadership Team, who was not involved in the incident, will take the views of the pupil who has been subject to the physical intervention and will also discuss the incident with any children or staff who were present and record this discussion, using the physical

intervention form (appendix 3). Written statements will be taken where appropriate and scanned/saved with the behaviour log on Arbor and saved with the incident report. In line with our commitment to working with parents, we aim to maintain an open discussion during any relevant procedure which may follow an incident. The member of staff involved may seek guidance from a senior colleague and/or their trade union representative before filling in their report.

e. The Governing Board will regularly review the number and type of incidents in which physical intervention and/or restraint has been necessary. This will be used to ensure that there is adherence to this policy and to identify improvement needed in other policies and procedures of individual academies.

f. Records will be retained and analysed by the principal, and SENCO where physical intervention was used on a pupil with SEND, on a termly basis to ensure that such interventions are being used appropriately, and to identify patterns of behaviour and responses to that behaviour that may require changes to school practice, e.g. increased staff training or further behavioural or emotional support.

9a. Recording and reporting the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint

Procedures are also in place for recording and reporting any incident involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention, whether or not physical force has been used. This duty applies even where such interventions are agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Incidents involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention will be recorded as soon as practicable after the event by the staff members involved and, wherever possible, no later than the same day. This will be completed in Arbor as a Behaviour incident.

For the purposes of this policy, non-physical restrictive interventions include actions that restrict a pupil's movement without direct physical contact, such as preventing a pupil from leaving a space or removing an item that enables mobility.

The school will record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff directly involved.
- The time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including SEND where applicable.

- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance.
- Any post-incident support provided, including medical or emotional support where relevant.

Parents will be informed in writing of incidents involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention as soon as practicable, and no later than the same day, unless it appears that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. Where parents cannot be informed for this reason, the incident will be reported to the local authority.

Where an incident involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention also constitutes a significant use of force, the school will follow the reporting procedure for significant use of force only, and information will not be duplicated.

Records of seclusion and non-physical restrictive interventions will be retained, monitored, and reviewed alongside records of physical intervention to support oversight, identify patterns or trends, and inform any necessary changes to school practice or pupil support.

10. Sharing of information

All members of the Academy community should know of the existence of this policy. In principle, as few people as possible should know of any specific incident and staff should maintain confidentiality to the greatest possible extent. This is to enable the Principal, the Trust and staff involved in any consequence or complaint to do so without having acquired hearsay knowledge.

11. Action after an Incident

The Principal will ensure that each incident is reviewed, investigated and recorded as stated above.

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible.

Where possible, we will hold a 'hot' debrief shortly after the incident to allow for any concerns to be addressed straight away, followed by a ‘cold’ debrief a few days later, which will include the pastoral lead, DSL and other relevant members of staff to consider if a plan is needed to mitigate the need for physical intervention going forward.

If further action is required, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedures which may include:

a) Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
b) Dealing with Allegations against Staff Policy
c) Behaviour Policy
d) Exclusion Procedure

The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed. Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

12. Complaints

The availability of a clear policy about reasonable force and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them.

Complaints following a dispute about the use of physical intervention by an adult should be pursued in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

13. Related policies/documents

This policy should be read alongside the following documents:

- Vision and Aims,
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy,
- Anti-Bullying Policy,
- Health and Safety Policy,
- Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy, Behaviour and Policy,
- Accessibility Policy and Equalities Plan,
- Intimate Care Policy,
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy,
- Complaints Policy,
- Whistle Blowing Policy,
- Data Protection,
- Dealing with Allegations Against Staff.

14. Legal Frameworks

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2011
- Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010

- DfE ‘Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools’ Dec 2025
- DfE ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ 2023
- DfE ‘Keeping children safe in education 2025’
- HM Government ‘Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention’ 2019

Appendix 1

Advice for staff

1. At Ocean Academy, we believe that physical intervention and/or restraint should be the last resort. In the majority of cases de-escalation and diffusion are the appropriate methods of dealing with situations that might result in a threat to the health and safety of any individuals. On extremely rare occasions it may be appropriate for staff to intervene physically with or between pupils. These include:

    - Injury, or risk of injury, to another pupil
    - Injury, or risk of injury, to a member of staff
    - Serious damage to property that would result in harm to a person.

2. Any intervention should be a last resort and be **proportionate, reasonable** and **appropriate,** and be done with the aim to **reduce** not **provoke.**

3. All staff owe a **duty of care** to pupils. To take no action, where the outcome is that a pupil injures him/herself, or another, including staff, could be seen as negligence.

4. Members of staff facing confrontational situations with pupils are reminded that the following behaviours can either reduce or inflame incidents, and that a brief moment of risk assessment may allow the time to decide on the appropriate action necessary.

5. **Staff are strongly advised not to physically stop pupils from leaving their room if the member of staff considered that there would be a risk of physical harm to themselves.**

6. **Remaining calm –** the ability to try and remain calm and appear relaxed is less likely to provoke. A relaxed posture and a non-threatening (CALM) stance, i.e. not toe-to-toe, are recommended.

7. **Awareness of Space –** try to be aware of the space around you and avoid stepping into another individual's personal/intimate space. Try to take a step back outside the circle of danger.

8. **Pacing and Chasing –** angry people often pace around in tense situations and staff should try to avoid the temptation to follow as they attempt to help them calm down. This can be counter-productive as it may trigger an animal chase response and drive the other person away. Where possible it is preferable for the

staff member to stand still, speaking calmly, clearly and confidently – or even sit down.

9. **Intonation -** when people are anxious or angry they tend to talk faster, higher and more loudly. In a potential crisis situation staff need to deliberately speak slower, lower and more quietly
10. **Help Script**

    I. Connect by using pupil's name
    II. Recognise the feelings
    III. Tell the pupil you're there to help
    IV. You talk and I will listen
    V. Give direction

11. **Diffusing body language responses**

- Social distance
- Sideways stance, step back
- Intermittent eye contact
- Relaxed body posture
- Palms open

12. **Calm Stance**

Think of the values of stepping back from a situation, both physically and emotionally:

- Allows a more considered response
- Time to make a 'dynamic' risk assessment and seek assistance
- Allows other person 'take up' time to make their own choices

13. **Application of Force (DfES advice 10/98)**

Staff should **NOT** act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury. This includes: -

- Slapping, punching, kicking or tripping a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against joints
- Indecently touching, holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear
- Other than in the most extreme circumstances that are exceptional, using reasonable force to hold a pupil face down on the ground **(*This can result in death*)**

14. **In the event of a serious incident** e.g. a fight, staff should:

- Make their presence felt – "stop fighting, stop fighting"
- Send for assistance
- Spell out sanctions
- Remove the 'fuel' by clearing the 'audience' away
- Be a witness
- Intervene physically if confident and having assessed the degree of risk
- **But** should not ignore or walk away.

Appendix 2

SOME NON- PHYSICAL CRISIS INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES

Do	**Don't**
appear calm and relaxed	appear afraid and unsure of yourself; appear bossy, arrogant; assume an "I don't give a damn about you" attitude
keep the pitch and volume of your voice down	raise your voice
feel comfortable with the fact that you are in control (if you control yourself, you control the situation); project a calm assured feeling that you will see the situation through to peaceful end no matter what happens	appear to expect an attack (or you will have one)
talk with the pupil	give commands; make demands
be very matter of fact if the pupil becomes agitated; be sensitive and flexible; be flexible yet consistent; be aware of body language; monitor breathing (chest movements) which can telegraph aggressive responses	make threats (especially any that you are not absolutely sure that you can carry through!); maintain continuous eye contact; gesticulate (this may provoke confrontation)
stay close to the pupil and attend to him/her	turn your back or leave; invade the pupil's personal space
be patient; if a pupil's agitation increases to the verge of	display emotion; argue;

attack: Acknowledge his/her feelings; Continue with a matter of fact attitude; Always leave the pupil an avenue of escape	corner the pupil physically or psychologically
where possible, remain seated as long as the pupil does; avoid crowding	▪get up and move towards the pupil
stay near him/her, about one arm's length away; stand to one side; give the pupil more space if appropriate	give up
seek to relax your muscles and keep them under control.	tense your muscles

Appendix 3 (updated)

Physical Intervention Report Form

We believe that reasonable force should only be used when absolutely necessary. With this in mind, this form has been created to ensure that all incidents of this type are recorded. Incidents must also be documented in My Concern under the category of Restraint, with this form uploaded.

Name of staff member	
Name of pupil	
Date	
Time	
Location	
Name(s) of staff member(s) who witnessed the incident	
Informed parties (parents, social workers, police, etc.)	
Circumstances prior to the incident	
Details of the incident	
Details of any negative impact on other pupils	

Reason(s) for physical intervention (please tick)	
To prevent a pupil from causing injury to themselves or others.	
To prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence.	
To prevent a pupil from damaging property.	
To prevent a pupil from causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.	
Was it a planned intervention, e.g. in line with approved strategies for the behaviour of specific pupils? (Please circle)	Yes/No
Brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary	
Any post-incident support required	
Any disciplinary additional action taken	

Injuries (if any) to staff members, the pupil concerned or other pupils	
Damage (if any) to property	
Recommendation(s) to avoid future incidents	
Principal's signature:	**Date:**
Signature of staff member concerned:	**Date:**