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POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

This policy has been formed with due regard to:

DfE Guidance, 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools Guidance for schools in England' April 2026

Version: 1.0

Issue Date: May 2026

Next Review Date: September 2027

Approved By: Head Teacher & Governing Body

Introduction

1. Educational excellence, discipline, mutual care and respect and community service are the foundations for our approach to leading and managing learning and behaviour at the school.
2. We value and promote an inclusive culture where all pupils are rewarded and praised regularly, consistently and fairly; and where staff acknowledge any barriers to learning which individual pupils need to overcome to make progress. The school operates a firm but fair and just approach, applied rigorously, robustly and consistently, ensuring that disruptive behaviour by the few, does not damage the achievements of the many.
3. The school creates a supportive environment which allows pupils to flourish within a culture of high expectations, unconditional positive regard, deliberate 'sisterhood' and compassionate consistency. The expectations we have for AASSG are set out in the Pupil Code of Conduct, which is shared with pupils and parents/carers.
4. The school aims to build a welcoming and stable environment where pupils feel safe, secure and cared for. The safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff is paramount.
5. The school has a responsibility to support pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour. Most pupils can cope with the demands of their environment and respond positively to the strategies outlined in the school's behaviour policy. However, it is also recognised that there are occasions when the use of reasonable force or 'positive handling' is appropriate and necessary to support pupils to self-regulate.
6. This policy should also be read in conjunction with our anti-bullying policy and the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) policy. This policy is written in conjunction with the latest Department for Education (DfE) 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' guidance. (Effective April 2026)
7. Please note that while this policy is intended to guide staff, nothing in this policy overrides the requirements of the DfE statutory guidance, which must be observed at all times.

Aims

- To provide clarification to all staff on positive handling.
- To help all staff feel confident about using restrictive interventions when they feel it is necessary.
- To make clear the responsibility of the principal and local accountability board in respect of this policy.
- To support the mission, vision and values of the trust and its establishments.

Who is responsible for this policy?

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory or trust framework.

The Head teacher has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success. **Defining terms**

8. At AASSG, the terminology adopted that is used to describe any physical intervention is 'positive handling'. This encompasses those terms defined below and captured by the DfE statutory guidance.
9. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances'.
10. The term 'significant incident' means any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. A significant incident will include when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.
11. The term 'restrictive intervention' means to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body of a pupil. Restrictive intervention can involve no physical contact with a pupil (for example, removing a walking aid).
12. 'Seclusion' means a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.
13. Seclusion should not be confused with removal from the classroom which is a disciplinary intervention used in response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour.

Who can use reasonable force?

14. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.
15. Schools should ensure that staff who are more likely to need to physically intervene to support a pupil's behaviour, such as a member of the senior leadership team, pastoral staff, or staff who work with pupils with SEND are appropriately trained to do so.

When can reasonable force be used?

16. The Children Act 2004 provides a duty for all services to work together to protect children and promote their best interests; this includes keeping children safe. As a result, the school does not encourage a 'no contact' policy as there is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of its staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm.

17. 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. A dynamic risk assessment should always be taken where the risks of a pupil injuring themselves or others is balanced against the potential risks of a physical intervention and the risk of taking no action at all. It is expected that the vast majority of crisis behaviours are supported by positive behaviour supports or diversion de-escalation.
18. The trust recognises that at times there are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use reasonable force to safeguard children. There are also times when a school's Principal or those members of staff authorised by them may have to search or screen pupils for illegal items or those prohibited under the rules.
19. The DfE is clear that reasonable force can be used, but only in specific circumstances—such as pupils causing injury to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property or causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise. However, force cannot be used to search for items banned only under school rules.
20. Pupils with SEND should have details of their positive handling needs within their Individual education plan (IEP) or their positive handling plan.
21. Staff must not use physical intervention as a punishment under any circumstances.

Additional guidance for staff

22. Staff making the decision to use reasonable force should do so using a dynamic risk assessment.
23. The use of any physical intervention must be deemed reasonable, proportionate, and necessary, as a result of a dynamic risk assessment.
24. Physical intervention should only be used in emergency situations or as part of an agreed positive handling plan (Appendix 1).
 - 24.A It is lawful for staff to use physical intervention without specific training or qualifications, as long as it is deemed reasonable, proportionate and necessary.
25. The following techniques are not deemed reasonable, proportionate or necessary and therefore are not to be used at AASSG:
 - no pressure on the neck, throat, or chest
 - no techniques that interfere with breathing or circulation
 - ground restraint: must be avoided. If a pupil ends up on the ground, they must be moved to a safe position immediately and if that is not possible, you should safely let go
26. Pain-Based Stimuli is strictly forbidden for use in behaviour management. 'Withdrawal/Time Out means removing a pupil from a situation which causes anxiety or distress to themselves and/or

taking them to a safer place where they have a better chance of composing themselves. This may require physical intervention as a result of a dynamic risk assessment.

27. A dynamic risk assessment is completed 'in the moment' by the member of staff. The staff member must consider the potential risks of a physical intervention against the risk of taking no action at all.

28. Haptic communication or acceptable touch are allowed where appropriate. For example, a hand on a shoulder can sometimes offer support. However, staff must be mindful of appropriate touch too. Some pupils with SEND might require a positive handling plan to develop their understanding of acceptable touch.

Recording and reporting significant incidents

29. AASSG recognises that at times there are circumstances in which staff may use force in a way which amounts to a significant incident in order to safeguard children.

30. Where there has been a significant incident the member of staff must:

- a. complete the Reporting Form under Appendix 2 of this policy; and
- b. submit the Reporting Form to the responsible person (this should be a member of SLT) as soon as practicable and no later than by the end of the school day.

31. Where there has been a significant incident the school will report this to the parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and no later than on the same day, unless the disclosure would result in harm due to abuse and neglect.

32. In those scenarios, staff must instead report the incident to their local authority.

33. If a member of staff is unsure whether an incident would constitute reasonable force or a significant incident, they should consult a senior member of staff as soon as practicable to determine whether the Reporting Form should be completed.

34. All incidents must also be recorded on the central positive handling log (see Appendix 4).

35. Records must be kept until the child's 25th birthday.

36. If an incident relates to child sexual abuse, records must be kept until the child's 75th birthday.

Use of restrictive interventions and seclusion

36. AASSG recognises that at times there are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use restrictive interventions or seclusion.

37. Seclusion will be used by schools as a safety measure to protect others from harm where a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.

38. Members of staff have the power to use restrictive interventions, which may also include the use of reasonable force.

39. Schools expect that staff should limit the use of restrictive interventions and, in most situations, will seek to minimise the use through prevention and de-escalation.

Schools should seek to minimise the use of restrictive interventions by:

- considering how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to learn and thrive
- sharing best practice for whole class behaviour management
- training staff in effective communication strategies
- recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions
- working closely with parents to support individual pupils
- implementing support for pupils based on their identified needs **Reporting the use**

of restraint and/or seclusion

40. Where there has been use of seclusion or non-physical restraint incident the member of staff must:

- a. complete the Reporting Form under Appendix 3 of this policy; and
- b. submit the Reporting Form to the responsible person (this should be a member of SLT) as soon as practical and no later than by the end of the school day
- c. the incident must also be recorded on the central positive handling log

41. Schools will notify parents of the incident as soon as practicable after the incident, and no later than on the same day. This will apply even if restrictive interventions are in place as part of an agreed behaviour support plan.

42. If the use of restraint occurred alongside a significant incident, schools should report to parents under the procedure set out in 'Recording and reporting significant incidents'.

43. The school will provide written information to parents regarding the seclusion or restraint incident. Investigating complaints

44. Complaints about use of force will generally be investigated under the trust's complaints policy, unless an allegation is made which requires investigation under Part 4 of Keeping children safe in education 2025.

45. Where a member of staff has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder; this may provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action.

46. If a decision is taken to suspend a member of staff, the school will ensure that the member of staff has access to a named contact that can provide support.

47. The SLT will consider whether a member of staff has acted within the law when reaching a decision on whether or not to take disciplinary action.

48. As an employer, AASSG has a duty of care towards its employees. Appropriate pastoral care will be provided to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following the use of reasonable force. Support offered will be in line with that outlined in the school’s safeguarding and child protection policy. Other physical contact with pupils

49. There are occasions when physical contact with a pupil is proper and necessary, other than when using reasonable force or other restrictive interventions. There are many examples, and the following is by no means an exhaustive list:

- when comforting a distressed pupil
- when a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- to demonstrate how to use certain equipment
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- when administering first aid; and/or

1. to guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate

1. VERSION HISTORY

Issue Date	Version Number	Approved By
May 2026	V1	HT & GB

Pupil name	DOB	Form	Date completed	Review date
Additional information e.g. medical conditions				

Trigger behaviours	De-escalation strategies	Preferred positive handling techniques. (to be used as a last resort)

Repair and rebuild post intervention	Evaluation and plan to reduce (complete during review)
Do you wish to be informed upon each occasion that a restrictive intervention is used? (delete as appropriate)	YES/NO
Staff trained in Team Teach are authorised to use the following techniques if deemed reasonable, proportionate and necessary at the time of any incidents	

Signed	Date
Principal	
Parent/carer	

Appendix 2: Significant Incident Reporting Form

Date of Incident:	Time of Incident:
Location of Incident:	
Duration of Incident:	
Dealt with by:	
Report Completed by:	

TYPE OF INCIDENT / CONCERN:

Use of Reasonable Force	
Significant Incident	

Name of Pupil	
Witnesses	
Does the pupil have SEND?	
SEND Status Code	

SUMMARY OF THE INCIDENT (attach additional sheets if necessary) Include:

- Brief account
- What led to the incident
- Identified or potential triggers (if known)
- Preventative and/or de-escalation strategies used
- What type of reasonable force was applied
- Degree of force
- Details of any physical injuries sustained
- Why the use of force was necessary
- Post incident support (including medical treatment)

ACTION TAKEN & FOLLOW UP (attach any letter to parent/carers)

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Other Information: (previous history log, background information etc)

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REASON FOR REFERRAL TO LEADERSHIP TEAM

Signed by Reporting teacher

Signed by Leadership

Appendix 3: Use Of Seclusion and Non-Force Related Restraint

REPORTING FORM

N.B. If the incident has involved the use of force and/or force related restraint the form under Appendix 2 should be used instead.

Date of Incident:	Time of Incident:
Location of Incident:	
Duration of Incident:	
Dealt with by:	
Report Completed by:	

TYPE OF INCIDENT / CONCERN:

Seclusion	
Non-physical restrictive intervention	

Name of Pupil	
Witnesses	
Does the pupil have SEND?	
SEND Status Code	

SUMMARY OF THE INCIDENT (attach additional sheets if necessary) Include:

- Brief account
- Why intervention was necessary.
- Details of any injuries sustained (if applicable)
- Post-incident support (including medical treatment)

ACTION TAKEN & FOLLOW UP (attach any letter to parent/carers)

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Other Information: (previous history log, background information etc)

Reason for referral to Leadership Team

LEADERSHIP COMMENTS

Signed by Reporting teacher

Signed by Leadership