Iffley Academy

Positive Handling Policy

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Introduction

Aligned with The Iffley Academy's mission to educate, inspire, and celebrate our students, this policy reinforces our commitment to creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive community. At the heart of our work is a belief in fostering active citizenship, resilience, and confidence, ensuring every student is equipped to embrace their individuality and achieve their fullest potential. Our approach is guided by the Academy's core values of respect, confidence, responsibility, reflection, resilience, and individuality, which serve as the foundation for all actions and interventions within the school environment.

By integrating these values, this Positive Handling Policy aspires to uphold the dignity, well-being, and personal growth of all students, ensuring that every interaction aligns with their unique needs and aspirations. We aim to create an environment where students feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive both academically and personally. Through the principles of restorative practices, we emphasise the importance of building and maintaining strong, trusting relationships that enhance emotional literacy and community cohesion.

This policy not only prioritises safety and inclusivity but also reinforces the essential skills of independence and effective communication. These attributes are integral to our mission of preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of adulthood. By embedding these principles into every aspect of our ethos, we strive to create a learning environment that is both aspirational and reflective of our unwavering dedication to each student's growth and success.

Purpose

The Iffley Academy is committed to its duty of care towards pupils, employees, and visitors, ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all. Recognising that touch is a sensitive issue requiring careful judgment, the Academy provides clear guidance and appropriate training to safeguard both children and staff. This policy adheres to current Government legislation and reflects joint guidance from the Department of Health and the Department for Education, particularly concerning children with learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and mental health challenges.

Restraint or restrictive physical interventions involve the intentional use of force to overpower a person. Such measures may be necessary only when an individual is actively resisting and poses a significant risk of harm to themselves or others. Examples of situations where restraint might be required include:

- Preventing harm by holding someone to avoid injury or reduce risk.
- Protecting property from damage through physical intervention.
- Preventing criminal offenses through physical restraint.
- Moving an individual resisting intervention to a safer environment.
- Addressing behaviours that disrupt discipline.
- Preventing someone from entering a high-risk environment.

It is important to note that restraint is not justified when a pupil seeks to leave a conflict situation unless they are moving towards a dangerous scenario, such as running into traffic or acting with violent intent. For instance, blocking a child's movement—such as standing in a doorway—can result in staff injury, which is often unintentional and caused by the child's heightened stress state.

Restraint should always be a **last resort**, applied proportionately and with careful consideration of the safety and dignity of all parties involved. Positive handling practices, which include a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour, must always prioritise the core values of **care**, **protection**, and **dignity**. The Academy strives to minimise the use of restrictive practices and ensure that the application of force is lawful, ethical, evidence-based, and consistent with safeguarding principles.

Guiding Principles

This policy supports the academy's core aims to foster strong, trusting relationships between students and staff and to provide a respectful and inclusive environment. These guiding principles ensure all interventions are trauma-informed, promoting emotional literacy and building strong community connections.

This policy is underpinned by the following core beliefs:

- Recognition of each individual's unique identity and needs.
- Respect for dignity and the right to a safe learning environment.
- A proactive, preventative approach to managing behaviour.
- Compliance with equality laws, safeguarding policies, and human rights standards.

The Iffley Academy emphasises trauma-informed approaches, acknowledging the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Staff are trained to consider these factors and employ strategies prioritising de-escalation and emotional regulation.

Key Practices

The following practices integrate Iffley Academy's aim to build independence, communication skills, and behaviours for learning. By fostering independence and effective communication, these practices prepare students for real-life situations and employment opportunities.

1. Risk Assessments and Positive Handling Plans (PHPs)

- Risk assessments identify triggers and risks associated with challenging behaviour.
- PHPs are collaboratively developed with staff, parents, and, where appropriate, the child.
- PHPs include strategies, effective responses, and intervention scenarios.
- Multi-agency input is encouraged, and plans are reviewed annually or after significant incidents.

2. Positive Behaviour Management

- Non-physical de-escalation techniques are prioritised.
- Positive reinforcement and restorative practices foster appropriate behaviour.
- The Academy employs therapeutic approaches, including sensory regulation, visual timetables, and personalised reward systems.

3. Responding to Emergencies

- Physical interventions are used only as a last resort and must be proportional and necessary.
- Staff are trained in early intervention techniques to prevent escalation.

4. Use of Floor Holds

- Prohibited except in life-threatening emergencies.
- Incidents involving floor holds must be reported immediately to relevant authorities.
- Staff using these techniques must have specialised training.

Legal Framework

Key legislation includes:

- Children Act 1989: Welfare of the child is paramount.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006: Allows reasonable force to prevent harm or maintain discipline.
- Equality Act 2010: Prohibits discrimination.
- Children and Families Act 2014: Highlights duties to support pupils with special needs.
- Human Rights Act 1998 and UNCRC (1991): Emphasise safeguarding and dignity.

Relevant guidance includes:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023).

- Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention (2022).
- [Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (DfE, 2013)](.).
- Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (2024).

Incident Reporting and Follow-Up

It is critical to ensure that all incidents involving physical restraint are documented promptly, thoroughly, and in a way that supports safeguarding, transparency, and continuous improvement.

Key Requirements:

- **Timely Recording:**
    - All incidents involving physical restraint must be recorded as soon as practicable, and within **24 hours**.
- **Serious Incident Reports:**
    - Reports must not be completed until all individuals involved have fully recovered from the immediate effects of the incident.
- **Report Content:**
  Reports must include the following details:
    - **Clear Context and Description:** A full description of the incident, including events leading up to it.
    - **Actions Taken:**
        - Details of de-escalation attempts prior to physical restraint.
        - A description of the interventions used during the incident.
    - **Persons Involved:** Identification of individuals involved in the incident.
    - **Post-Incident Follow-Up:**
        - Actions taken to support recovery and mitigate future risks.
- **Emotional Support and Relationship Repair:**
    - Schools must provide emotional support to all affected parties.
    - Relationship repair processes should be facilitated following significant incidents to rebuild trust and well-being.
- **Parent/Carer Communication:**
    - Parents or carers must be informed as soon as possible.
    - Exceptional circumstances may apply where disclosure would jeopardise child safety or confidentiality.
- **Secure Record Keeping:**
    - All records must be stored securely in **tamper-proof systems** to ensure safeguarding and transparency.
- **Data Analysis and Improvement:**
    - Regular analysis of incident data must be undertaken to:
        - Identify trends and recurring themes.
        - Inform improvements to behavioural strategies.
        - Refine intervention techniques to prevent future incidents.

Practice at The Iffley Academy:

- **Online Behaviour Recording System:**
  - An online system is used to **monitor trends and themes** in behaviour.
  - This proactive approach enables the academy to:
    - Implement **early, targeted interventions**.
    - Reduce the occurrence of challenging incidents.
    - Ensure that support strategies remain **effective and relevant** over time.

By adhering to these principles and processes, schools can ensure that incidents are managed appropriately, promoting a safer, supportive environment for all students and staff.

Training and Competence

In line with the academy's commitment to "Education for Life," training ensures staff can support the individual needs of each student effectively. This includes promoting independence and enhancing learning experiences through technology and personalised strategies.

This Policy expects that any physical intervention should be performed by trained staff who are competent in the use of a recognised behaviour management system. If a non-British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) or the Institute of Conflict Management (ICM) training course is used, there is an expectation that the County Council will be consulted for approval.

All training bodies, organisations, and the tutors/instructors that provide training should be thoroughly assessed to ascertain:

- Background knowledge
- Experience and recognition
- Prevention and management of aggression training

OCC's preferred approach is not necessarily for whole staff team training, but we recognise that training should be proportionate to the level of risk and exposure that staff may have to the most challenging children.

Awareness for all staff should be raised as part of the annual safeguarding training. Opportunities should be arranged for staff to practice their training between the main training sessions.

- Staff receive accredited training from recognised providers, focusing on de-escalation strategies and safe handling techniques.
- Annual refreshers ensure training remains up to date.
- Training includes simulated practice scenarios and considerations for pupils with specific needs.

In line with the academy's commitment to "Education for Life," training ensures staff can support the individual needs of each student effectively. This includes promoting

independence and enhancing learning experiences through technology and personalised strategies.

Prohibited Practices

In alignment with Oxfordshire County Council's guidance for students up to 18, the following practices are strictly prohibited:

- **Prone Restraints**: Restraints that involve placing a student in a facedown position are prohibited under all circumstances, except in life-threatening emergencies, due to the associated risks to safety and dignity.
- **Actions Causing Pain or Humiliation**: Any intervention designed to punish or demean a student is strictly forbidden. This includes actions that may inadvertently cause emotional or physical harm.
- **Punitive Restraints**: Restraints must never be used as a form of punishment or to assert authority. All interventions must prioritise de-escalation and respect.
- **Unsafe Practices**: Interventions that compromise the safety, dignity, or well-being of the student, such as excessive force or neglecting individual needs, are not permitted.

All interventions must prioritise the safety, dignity, and well-being of students and staff. The Iffley Academy is committed to fostering an environment where every student's rights and needs are respected. Staff are trained in evidence-based practices to ensure interventions are lawful, proportionate, and reflective of the Academy's values of care and inclusion. Any deviation from these standards will be thoroughly reviewed to ensure compliance and accountability.

Post-Incident Support

Post-incident processes reflect the Academy's restorative practice principles, helping students and staff understand the emotional and behavioural aspects of incidents. These strategies promote resilience and reflection, aligning with our values of respect and responsibility. Specific measures include:

- Providing immediate medical and emotional support to affected individuals.
- Conducting structured debriefs to allow staff and pupils to reflect and learn from incidents.
- Collaborating with multi-agency professionals for follow-up actions when necessary.

Complaints

- Parents and pupils can raise concerns about staff conduct through Iffley's formal complaint procedures.

- Complaints related to physical interventions are reviewed to ensure policy compliance.

Glossary

- **ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences)**: Stressful or traumatic events experienced during childhood, which may impact emotional and physical well-being.
- **BILD (British Institute of Learning Disabilities)**: An organisation promoting improved services and life opportunities for people with learning disabilities.
- **CAMHS**: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- **ICM**: Institute of Conflict Management.
- **Learning Disability**: Defined by lower intellectual ability (IQ <70), significant impairment in adaptive functioning, and childhood onset. Learning disabilities are distinct from specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, which do not affect intellectual ability (based on NICE Guidelines, 2015).
- **Positive Handling**: Includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. The term 'restraint' is used whenever force is applied to overcome resistance.
- **Non-Physical Interventions (No Touch)**: Includes adaptations to the physical environment, body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and choice of words.
- **Physical Contact (Contingent Touch)**: Includes reassuring touch (e.g., holding hands) or prompts for guidance (e.g., helping a student with sensory impairment).
- **Restraint/Restrictive Physical Interventions**: The positive application of force to prevent harm, reduce injury risk, or de-escalate dangerous situations. Blocking a pupil's escape from a conflict situation is generally not justified unless safety is at risk. Restraint or restrictive physical interventions involve the intentional use of force to overpower a person. These actions may be necessary in situations where an individual is actively resisting and poses a significant risk of harm to themselves or others. Examples include:
  ❖ Preventing harm by holding someone to avoid injury or reduce risk.
  ❖ Protecting property from damage by intervening physically.
  ❖ Preventing criminal offenses through physical restraint.
  ❖ Moving an individual resisting intervention to a safer environment.
  ❖ Addressing behaviours that disrupt discipline.
  ❖ Stopping someone from entering a high-risk environment.

It is important to note that restraint is not justified when a pupil seeks to leave a conflict situation unless they are moving towards a dangerous scenario, such as running into traffic or acting with violent intent. Blocking a child's movement, such as standing in a doorway, can lead to staff injury, which is often unintentional and a result of the child's heightened stress state. Restraint should always be a last resort, applied proportionately and with consideration for all parties' safety.

- **Staff**: Refers to teaching and non-teaching staff and contracted personnel under the Head Teacher's authority.

- **Targeted Interventions**: Use identified patterns to design targeted interventions for individual pupils, groups, or classes.

References

Codes of Practice and National Minimum Standards (cross-referenced throughout this policy):

- 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice
- Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice: Protecting the Vulnerable (2007)
- The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools
- The National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools

Guidance:

- Draft Guidance for Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Mental Health Difficulties (DfE, DH 2017)
- Guidance for the Restrictive Physical Interventions: Providing Safe Services for People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DfES, DH 2014)
- Positive and Proactive Care: Reducing the Need for Restrictive Interventions (Department of Health, 2015)
- Protocol for Local Children's Services Authorities on Restrictive Physical Interventions (Association of Directors of Children's Services, 2009)
- Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force: Advice for Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (DfE, 2013)
- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools (DfE, 2016)
- Residential Special Schools: National Minimum Standards (DfE, 2015)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions (DfE, 2015)
- The Children Act 1989 Regulations and Guidance – Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2015)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

NICE Guidelines:

- Challenging Behaviour and Learning Disabilities: Prevention and Interventions for People with Learning Disabilities whose Behaviour Challenges
- Autism in Under 19s: Support and Management
- Antisocial Behaviour and Conduct Disorders in Children and Young People: Recognition and Management
- Violence and Aggression: Short-Term Management in Mental Health, Health and Community Settings
- Looked-After Children and Young People

- Psychosis and Schizophrenia in Children and Young People: Recognition and Management

Legislation:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006: Use of Reasonable Force
- Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)

This policy will be reviewed in December 2026 or earlier if significant updates are required.