

The **GALLERY** TRUST



A community of special schools



**Bloxham Grove**  
ACADEMY

## **Positive Handling Policy**

Written by:	Kelly Westwood
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SLT Lead:	Kelly Westwood
Head Teacher:	Charlotte Roberts
Chair of LAB:	Sian Rodway

## **Introduction**

Bloxham Grove Academy is a special academy for children and young people, up to the age of 18, with complex special educational needs and disabilities. All of our students are individuals and we pride ourselves on taking a personalised approach to their provision. Students have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and our area of expertise supports students with Moderate Cognition and Learning Difficulties, Autism and/or Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. All of our students have some form of cognition and learning needs.

Our students also have a wide range of secondary special educational needs including;

- Social Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Communication and Interaction needs
- Sensory and/or Physical needs

We are situated in Bloxham Village, approximately 3 miles outside Banbury and our vision is to support the needs of students who live in North Oxfordshire.

The Academy currently has approximately 102 students on roll, and we will gradually increase our student numbers over the coming years. When full, Bloxham Grove Academy will have approximately 120 students on roll between the ages of 7 to 18, with students in Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5.

All our students are encouraged to fulfil their academic potential through a creative and engaging curriculum. This ensures that all our students are encouraged, valued and respected.

We are a member of The Gallery Trust, a special multi-academy trust based in Oxfordshire. The Gallery Trust is dedicated to providing outstanding education and support for children and young people with SEND.

## **Our aims and intentions**

Aligned with Bloxham Grove Academy's mission to educate, inspire and celebrate our students, this policy reinforces our commitment to creating a safe, nurturing and welcoming community where our students can thrive and grow academically and emotionally. At the heart of our work is a belief in fostering active citizenship, resilience and confidence, ensuring that every student is equipped to embrace their individuality and achieve their fullest potential. Our approach is guided by our school values of **belonging, resilience, trust,**

**honesty, kindness** and **respect**. These values serve as the foundation for all our actions and interactions within our school environment and community.

By integrating these values into our whole school practice, this Positive Handling Policy aspires to uphold the dignity, wellbeing 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 academically, personally and emotionally. Through the principles of restorative practices, we emphasise the importance of building and maintaining strong, trusting and honest relationships between all members of our community to 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 commitment to each student's growth and success.

## **Purpose**

Bloxham Grove Academy is committed to its duty of care towards all members of our school community: students, employees, parents and visitors. We endeavour to ensure that we create a safe and respectful learning environment for all. Recognising that touch is a sensitive issue requiring careful judgement, the school provides clear guidance and appropriate training to safeguard both children and adults. 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 special educational needs and learning disabilities, autism spectrum conditions and mental health needs.

This policy is statutory and aligned with the Department for Education's Use of Reasonable Force guidance (February 2025) and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025. All staff must comply with this policy and the legal frameworks set out herein.

## **Definitions**

### **Restrictive Intervention (RI)**

Restrictive intervention is any intervention that restricts a student's movement, liberty, or freedom to act independently. This includes environmental, physical, mechanical, and sometimes medication-based methods used to manage behaviour.

### **Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI)**

Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) is a use of force to restrict a student's movement against their will. This includes physical restraint techniques used to prevent harm or serious damage. RPIs should be used only as a last resort and in a manner that is necessary, proportionate and reasonable.

### **Reasonable Force**

Reasonable force refers to the minimum amount of force necessary to prevent a student from causing harm to themselves or others, damaging property, or committing an offence. Reasonable force must be proportionate to the circumstances and the seriousness of the behaviour or potential harm.

### **Significant Incident**

A significant incident is any incident where the use of reasonable force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between students and staff.

### **Significant Incidents at BGA**

A significant incident at Bloxham Grove Academy is defined as any event where a student's behaviour, emotional state, or level of risk escalates beyond what is ordinarily expected for that individual, and where staff intervention is required to maintain safety.

In line with statutory guidance, a significant incident includes any situation where the use of reasonable force goes beyond appropriate physical contact.

### **At BGA, a significant incident includes one or more of the following:**

- Safety concerns for the individual, staff, or other students
- Behaviours that are outside the individual's 'norm' or are described as out of character
- A period of dysregulation that lasts significantly longer than is typical for that student
- Self-harm or behaviour that indicates an attempt to harm themselves
- Child-on-child violence, including targeted or unprovoked high-risk behaviour
- A clear escalation in behaviour intensity, frequency, or risk
- Significant damage or harm to the academy environment

- Any use of physical or restrictive intervention, including restrictive physical intervention (RPI), environmental restraint, or proximity control
- Injury or first aid required as a result of a behaviour incident

### **Following every significant incident:**

- The student's Positive Support Plan (PSP) will be reviewed and updated where required
- A debrief and wellbeing check will be held with all staff involved
- Student wellbeing will be checked and supported
- Student voice will be captured through the BGA Restore model
- Additional multi-agency or parental communication will take place where appropriate

### **Acceptable Physical Contact**

Bloxham Grove Academy recognises that physical contact is a natural and important part of supporting the holistic needs of children and young people with SEND. Physical contact can be appropriate, safe, and beneficial, and is not considered reasonable force when it does not restrict liberty, movement, or independence.

### **Examples of acceptable physical contact at BGA include:**

- Holding hands or linking arms for reassurance or guidance
- First aid and medical assistance
- Contingent touch, such as placing an arm lightly around a shoulder during distress
- Shaking hands, fist bumps, high fives, or gestures of celebration
- Hugs requested by the student, or where this is known to be part of their preferred regulation strategy
- Sensory touch or sensory-based intervention
- Intimate care, where supported by an Intimate Care Plan and parental consent
- Light physical prompting to support mobility (E.G guiding towards a door) where not resisting

### **Staff must always consider:**

- Whether the contact is age-appropriate, respectful, and in line with safeguarding expectations

- Whether the contact is in the student's **best interests**
- Whether the student's SEND profile, trauma history, sensory needs, or communication needs influence how touch is experienced
- Whether an alternative non-physical strategy is available

BGA does not operate a “no contact” policy, as this would prevent staff from providing the support and reassurance many students require, and contradicts Government guidance.

### **What is Restraint?**

**Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI)** or restraint is a form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact and the use of force to prevent, restrict, or subdue a student's movement. It must only be used when:

- There is an immediate risk of harm to the student or others
- There is risk of serious damage to property
- A student is attempting to enter a high-risk environment
- Preventing a criminal offence
- Conducting a statutory search for prohibited items

### **All restraint must prioritise the core values and be:**

- Necessary
- Reasonable — using no more force than needed for the shortest amount of time
- Proportionate to the level of risk
- Respectful of the student's care, dignity, protection and wellbeing
- In the **best interests** of the individual

**Restraint must never be used to punish, secure compliance, or for staff convenience.**

**Environmental restraint (RI)** is a type of restrictive intervention that limits a student's movement or access to an area without the use of physical force. This includes actions where staff alter or control the environment to reduce immediate risk.

### **Environmental restraint may include:**

- Blocking or standing near a doorway to prevent a student leaving a room if exiting would likely result in harm

- Proximity control to prevent a student from pacing across the academy site and escalating behaviour during dysregulation
- Temporarily restricting access to high-risk spaces (e.g., kitchen areas, car parks, workshops)
- Strategically positioning staff to redirect movement during unsafe episodes

Environmental restraint is not force, but it is a restrictive intervention because it limits liberty. Therefore:

- It must be used only when necessary and proportionate
- **It must be reported and recorded when significant** (E.G preventing clear danger or escalation)
- Staff must be able to justify that it was used to reduce risk and not to control or punish

Environmental restraint does not become seclusion unless a student is confined away from others and prevented from leaving.

**Mechanical restraint (RI)** refers to the use of equipment or devices to restrict movement. At Bloxham Grove Academy, we do not use mechanical restraint as a behaviour management strategy.

However, some students take medication prescribed by health professionals, with parental consent, to support regulation. This is not considered restraint but may be understood as part of a **medical intervention** that helps reduce behaviours that challenge. It is always governed by the student's Individual Health Care Plan and administered by trained staff.

Members of staff at Bloxham Grove Academy strive to minimise the use of restrictive practices and ensure that the application of force is lawful, ethical, evidence-based and consistent with safeguarding principles.

### **Seclusion**

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a student confined to a space away from others and preventing them from leaving, either through physical obstruction or by making them believe they will be punished if they attempt to leave.

At Bloxham Grove Academy, seclusion is only used as a safety measure when a student is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and there is an immediate risk of harm to themselves or others. Seclusion is never used as a punishment or to enforce compliance.

Any period of seclusion will:

- Take place in a safe, non-threatening environment
- Involve continuous supervision
- Last for the shortest possible time
- End as soon as the immediate risk has reduced

All incidents involving seclusion are recorded and reported in line with statutory guidance and the school's safeguarding procedures.

### **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 for all members of the community
- a proactive, preventative approach to managing risky, unsafe or negative behaviour
- compliance with equality laws, safeguarding policies and human rights standards

Bloxham Grove 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-escalations and emotional regulation.

Bloxham Grove Academy acknowledges its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty. The school ensures that safeguarding policies and practices do not unlawfully discriminate against students or staff based on protected characteristics and takes proportionate and positive action to support vulnerable groups.

The school also recognises the increased vulnerability of learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and ensures that safeguarding and restrictive intervention arrangements are appropriate and inclusive for these learners.

## **Key Practices**

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

### **1. Positive Support Plans (PSPs)**

Each student has a PSP (Positive Support Plan), which identifies any known triggers and risks for behaviours that may challenge, alongside agreed proactive strategies and responses to keep them and others safe. In addition, PSPs record foreseeable risks, outline strategies to avoid restraint, and specify planned responses, in line with the 2025 Reasonable Force guidance.

PSPs are co-produced with students and parents to ensure a collaborative approach, and may involve multi-agency partners such as Children's Social Care and CAMHS, where appropriate. They also set out clear strategies, effective responses, and agreed interventions to support the individual's needs consistently.

### **2. Risk–Benefit Assessments (RBA)**

Where a student has been involved in restrictive interventions, or where restrictive or physical restrictive intervention is considered foreseeable due to identified risk, the school will complete a formal Risk–Benefit Assessment.

The Risk–Benefit Assessment will:

- Identify known triggers and patterns
- Evaluate risks to the student, peers and staff
- Consider medical, sensory, trauma and SEND factors
- Assess the potential physical and emotional impact of intervention
- Evaluate whether benefits of intervention outweigh risks
- Identify preventative and de-escalation strategies
- Outline clear thresholds for intervention
- Be co-produced with parents/carers where appropriate

- Be reviewed following any significant incident

Risk–Benefit Assessments form part of the student’s safeguarding and behaviour documentation and are reviewed regularly by school staff.

### 3. Positive Behaviour Management in line with Restorative Approaches

Positive behaviour management at our school is underpinned by restorative approaches, ensuring that relationships remain central to our practice. Staff prioritise non-physical de-escalation strategies to reduce tension and support students in managing their emotions. We use a range of therapeutic approaches, including sensory regulation and visual timetables, to provide structure and promote self-regulation. In addition, rewards and celebration systems are embedded across the school to recognise positive choices and reinforce desired behaviours.

### 4. Use of Team Teach approved techniques

In line with Team Teach principles, staff prioritise de-escalation and preventative strategies, with physical intervention used only as a last resort. Any intervention must be necessary, reasonable, proportionate, and for the shortest possible time, and always maintaining the dignity and safety of students.

Floor holds are prohibited except in life-threatening situations. Incidents involving floor holds must be reported immediately to relevant authorities. Staff using these techniques must have received specialised training.

## **Legal frameworks and guidelines underpinning this policy**

Children’s Act 1989 - the 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 duty to support students with special educational needs and disabilities

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025

Use of Reasonable Force in Schools 2025

Behaviour in Schools - advice for headteachers and school staff 2024

Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention 2019

## **Significant Incident Reporting and Follow-Up**

It is critical that all incidents involving restraint are documented promptly, thoroughly and in a way that supports safeguarding, transparency and continuous reflective practice.

### **Key Requirements**

- **Timely Recording:** all incidents involving physical restraint (*and or restrictive intervention/ reasonable force*) must be recorded as soon as practicable and no later than the same working day.
  - **Significant Incident Reports:** reports must not be completed until all individuals involved have fully recovered from the immediate effects of the incident
  - **Duty to report to Parents:** The school must inform parents or carers as soon as reasonably practicable after any incident involving restrictive physical intervention, unless doing so would place the child at greater risk.
- All records will be reviewed regularly by senior leaders and governors to ensure accountability, equality monitoring, and identification of patterns. Governors also review patterns and trends in line with their duties under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, ensuring effective oversight of the school's use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

### **The following details will be reported via a phone call and followed up with an email:**

- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
  - A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
  - Brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
  - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
  - Following any restrictive physical intervention, the student will be checked over by a trained member of staff and offered first aid where required. Any marks, redness or bruising observed will be recorded, and parents will be informed as soon as practicable.
- Any injuries that are unexplained, significant, or raise concern will be escalated immediately to the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with

safeguarding procedures.

- **Record Content:** written reports must include the following details:
  - Names of students and staff involved
  - Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the student involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
  - Time
  - Date
  - Location
  - Length of time the force that was used
  - Account of the incident
  - Strategies used to support and to avoid using reasonable force
  - The type of reasonable force that was used
  - Degree of force
  - Why the force was necessary
  - Any injuries that were caused as a result of the reasonable force
  - Medical treatment offered and administered
  - Post incident support.
  - When and how parents were notified, any follow up actions and other witness accounts will also be recorded.
- **Data Analysis and Improvement:** regular analysis of incident data must be undertaken to
  - identify trends and recurring themes
  - inform improvements to behaviour strategies
  - refine intervention techniques to prevent future incidents

This procedure also applies to incidents of seclusion and non-physical restraint, even where no physical force is used.

By adhering to these principles and processes, Bloxham Grove Academy can best ensure that incidents are well managed, promoting a safer, supportive environment for all members of the community.

### **Training and Competence**

We are committed to ensuring that all members of staff working in the school have appropriate and up to date, accredited Level 2 Team Teach training, aligned with the latest statutory guidance. Refresher training is mandatory at least annually to maintain competence and awareness of legal responsibilities.

Two members of the Leadership Team at Bloxham Grove Academy are Intermediate Team Teach trained instructors and can disseminate training to members of staff. These members of staff are **Kelly Westwood** (Deputy Head Teacher) and **Luke Hudson** (Relationships and Positive Behaviour Lead).

## **Post-Incident Support**

Immediate medical and emotional support will be given for all involved in the incident. It will also include opportunities for the students to follow our 'Restore Model; emotionally regulate, reflect on the incident, and repair relationships through restorative approaches. Staff wellbeing will also be monitored and supported following incidents. Students will then be able to reintegrate into their class. Conducting structured debriefs to allow adults to reflect. There will be collaboration with multi-agency professionals for follow-up actions when necessary.

## **Complaints and Concerns**

Parents can raise concerns through The Gallery Trust's Complaints Policy. In line with the Complaints Policy, we strongly encourage parents to contact the Head Teacher on [office@bloxhamgroveacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@bloxhamgroveacademy.co.uk) in the first instance.

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## APPENDIX 1: Crib Sheet for Reporting Restrictive Intervention to parents

Section	Staff Script / Prompt
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>To ensure clear, consistent communication with parents following any incident involving restrictive intervention, reasonable force, seclusion or environmental restraint.</b>
Opening the Conversation	"Hello, it's [Name] calling from Bloxham Grove Academy. I'm calling to let you know about an incident involving [Student Name] today. Everyone is safe, but we are required to inform you as soon as practicable when a restrictive intervention has been used."
What Happened (Factual)	"At approximately [time], in [location], [brief description of event]."
Why Intervention Was Necessary	"Staff judged that there was an immediate risk of harm to [student/others/property], so a restrictive intervention was used in line with our Positive Handling Policy."
Type of Intervention Used	"The intervention used was: [restrictive physical intervention / environmental restraint/ seclusion]. This lasted for approximately [duration]."
Injuries and First Aid	"There were / were not any injuries. First aid was offered and was/ was not required/ accepted."
Post-Incident Actions	"Your child has had time to regulate and access our Restore model. Staff have completed the required reports, and we will review their Positive Support Plan [if needed]."
Next Steps / Invitation to Discuss	"If you would like to talk this through further, we're very happy to arrange a time. We will also let you know if we revise any support strategies."
Closing the Call	"Thank you for your time. Please contact us if you have any further questions or if there is anything you feel would help us support [Student Name] going forward."



