



ACET Searching, Confiscation and use of Reasonable Force

DATE: March 2026

POLICY LEAD: Deputy CEO

APPROVED BY: Executive



Excellence



Equity



Empowerment

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Level	Trust	
Approved By	Executive	
Approval Date	9 th March 2026	
<p>This policy remains valid until it is reviewed and replaced; it does not expire by date alone. Policies are reviewed annually, or sooner if required by statutory or legislative changes, in line with best practice.</p>		
Policy Lead / Author	Executive Principal	
Version Number	Date Issued	Updated Information
V1	Dec 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New policy.
V2	November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added further guidance if the search relates to possession of drugs, alcohol and weapons. The DSL must be informed. Further clarity added regarding informed consent and not immediately linking this directly to sanctions – in line with DfE guidance. Further clarity added regarding possible bias and how this data will be monitored closely in order to consider disproportionately represented groups. This data, alongside any actions taken, should be shared with the LGB. Updated section regarding when and which type of searches should be recorded and where this will be. Further clarification included about informing the police as a last resort and how the safeguarding/duty of care of all children is paramount, especially if a strip search is considered by the police. Additional clarification re: inappropriate images and when they should either be deleted or handed to the police. Academy staff need to have clarity about what the academy means by ‘reasonable grounds’ and then should apply this consistently. Use of reasonable force – section added relating to vulnerable groups and making reasonable adjustments which may include working with parents/carers to draw up an individual behaviour plan. Regarding weapons – this update has been made in line with DfE guidance Reasonable force will not be used by ACET staff to search pupils/students for potential weapons unless it is necessary to prevent the pupil/student from harming themselves or others, damaging property or causing disorder. Staff should always seek cooperation first and use force only as a last resort." The following has been added with regards to informing parents/carers - except where the police or DSL advise that immediate notification would

		<p>compromise an investigation or put the child at further risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity included about when videos should either be deleted or handed to the police. • Staff training considerations section added. Training should be updated annually.
V3	Jan 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amends made to incorporate DFE guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in school that becomes statutory in April 26. Changes to guidance on recording incidents, reporting to parents/carers and reporting to governors.
V4	Feb 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added to prohibited items list: 'Replicas or items intended to resemble knives or weapons'

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Statement of Intent

ACET recognises that pupils and students have the right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy and will do their utmost to ensure that, as far as possible, this right is respected. However, all ACET academies also recognise their obligation, under health and safety legislation, for the need to manage unnecessary risk to pupils/students and staff. They also recognise the significant importance given to their safeguarding duties, and in this case, the need to put the safeguarding of children at the centre of their approach to handling searches, confiscation and the reasonable use of force.

The intention of this policy is to set out the framework by which all ACET academies will meet this obligation by outlining the circumstances in which pupils/students will be screened, searched and, where required, the need for the use of reasonable force.

All staff will receive appropriate guidance and training about aspects outlined in this policy.

Searching pupils/students and confiscation – The Legal Framework

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

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012
- The School Behaviour (Determination and Publicising of Measures in Academies) Regulations 2012
- European Convention on Human Rights
- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force'
- DfE (2022) 'Behaviour and discipline in schools'
- DfE (2022) 'Searching, screening and confiscation'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'

The DfE's latest guidance on searching pupils/students and confiscation (2022) places a greater emphasis on safeguarding and understanding the rules on when you can search pupils/students, and what process should be followed.

Changes to guidance from September 2022

The updated DfE guidance emphasises the academy's safeguarding duty. This includes:

- Which staff members can search pupils/students
- Recording certain searches in your academy's safeguarding system
- What you should do before, during and after a search
- Guidance on strip searches and supporting the pupil/student afterwards
- The importance of staff understanding the rights of the pupil/student being searched

Prioritising safeguarding

All staff have a duty of care to all pupils/students in their academy. This means that there should be a balance between:

- the need to safeguard all pupils/students by confiscating harmful, illegal, or disruptive items, and
- the safeguarding needs and wellbeing of pupils/students suspected of possessing these items.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) sets out the statutory duty of all staff to make sure that they make decisions in the best interests of the child. This applies to decisions to search pupils/students and confiscate items.

All staff must be aware and vigilant about possible biases affecting decisions to carry out or escalate searches. The academy will use data from the record of searches to monitor whether any groups are disproportionately subject to searches. The DSL will analyse search data half-termly to identify any patterns that may indicate bias and will report findings to the Local Governing Body along with any actions taken to address concerns.

They should also consider that all pupils/students have a right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy, under [Article 8](#) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Any 'interference' with this right must be justified and proportionate.

Staff will only search a pupil/student if they have good reason to, considering that it could infringe upon their wellbeing and rights in several different ways. For example:

- Loss of privacy when clothes, bags or possessions are searched.
- Loss of a sense of security, if they feel they are being monitored and searched without reason.
- Impact on a pupil's/student's dignity or reputation if they are searched or suspected of possessing prohibited items.

Any pupil/student found in possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons must be treated as vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. Staff should be alert to potential risks to children who are:

- Showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour.
- In challenging family circumstances, such as drug and alcohol misuse.
- Misusing drugs or alcohol themselves.
- A search can play a vital role in identifying a safeguarding issue. The DSL must be informed of ANY searches where there were reasonable grounds to suspect a pupil/student was in possession of a prohibited item, regardless of whether items were found.

Who will carry out the search?

All staff members have the right to conduct a search (in line with the DfE guidance and underlying legislation), however, **in ACET academies only the Executive Principal/Principal or a member of staff authorised by these colleagues will have the power** to search a pupil/student for a prohibited or banned item, regardless of whether the pupil agrees (sections [550ZA](#) and [550ZB](#) of the Education Act 1996, and paragraph 10 in the guidance).

Principals and authorised staff members can search a pupil/student for:

- Any items with the pupil's/student's **informed consent**.
- Prohibited or banned items, **with or without the pupil's/student's consent (although seeking cooperation is always best practice even though consent is not required by law)**.

Prohibited items are:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Vapes
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Replicas or items intended to resemble knives or weapons
- Any item that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to:
 - Commit an offence
 - Cause personal injury (including to the pupil/student) or damage to property

This list is set out in [The Education Act 1996](#) and paragraph 3 of the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

NB. In addition to the list above, principals and authorised staff members can also search for other specific items that are banned in the academy.

Discussing the need for a search with pupils/students?

The principal or authorised staff member should:

- Make an assessment of how urgent the search is, and consider the risk to other pupils/students and staff. If the search does not happen straight away then the pupil/student should be supervised somewhere away from other pupils/students.
- The principal or authorised staff member (in the presence of another staff member) will discuss with the pupil/student the need for the search. The reasons for the search will be made clear linked to prohibited and unauthorised items.
- The preference at this stage is that the pupil/student relinquishes the prohibited item.
- Explain to the pupil/student how and where the search will happen, and give them the opportunity to ask questions about it.
- Always seek the pupil's/student's cooperation. If a pupil/student refuses to cooperate, the authorised member of staff should first consider why this is, and act proportionally. It may be that the pupil/student:
 - Is in possession of a prohibited or banned item
 - Does not understand the instructions or what a search will involve
 - Has previously had a distressing experience of being searched
- If the pupil/student still refuses to cooperate:
 - The academy should firstly consider why the pupil/student is refusing and whether sanction is appropriate. If they continue to refuse to co-operate with the search for a prohibited item, then staff should again seek informed consent. Following this, sanctions may be used in line with the academy behaviour and rewards policy
 - If there is concern that the refusal is due to the student having banned items on their person, then this should be **reported to 101 online** and the incident number recorded on CPOMs/My Concern. (If the same incident was to occur again with the same student, then the incident numbers should be linked when recording and informing the Police).
 - Assess whether it is necessary to use reasonable force to conduct the search (see guidelines later in this policy). This should be considered where it would prevent the pupil/student from harming themselves or others, damaging property or causing disorder. Note: you can only use reasonable force to search for **prohibited items** but not other items banned in the academy.

Under law:

- The person carrying out the search must be the same sex as the pupil/student being searched.
- There must be another member of staff present as a witness to the search. The member of staff witnessing the search must also be the same sex as the pupil/student being searched if this is reasonably practicable ([paragraph 6\(d\)](#) of section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996).

The only exception to this is if:

- The searcher ***reasonably** believes that there is a risk of serious harm being caused to a person if a search isn't carried out urgently, **and**
- It's not reasonably practical to summon another member of staff (to carry out the search or act as a witness) within the time available. For example, this may be the case if an academy has an all-female workforce on site at the time.
- When an authorised staff member conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report it to another member of staff and make sure that a record is kept (see the section on how to record searches for more support).

What does ***'reasonable grounds'** mean?

There is no specific guidance on what 'reasonable grounds' to suspect a pupil/student has prohibited item(s) means. It is up to the academy to decide what it may be. For example, you may:

- Hear the pupil/student or other pupils/students talking about an item.
- Be told directly of an item.

- See an item.
- Notice a pupil/student behaving in a way that causes you to suspect that they are concealing an item.

The academy may use CCTV footage to help decide whether to search for an item.

All staff who are authorised to carry out searches must understand what 'reasonable grounds' means in our academy and apply it consistently.

How to carry out a search

When searching a student authorised staff should avoid contact with the pupil/student. They should be asked to empty pockets, bags etc on to a surface. These items should only be handled if they are no longer on the child or the child is no longer in their possession. Authorised staff can search a pupil's pockets and require pupils/students to remove outer clothing, meaning clothes that are not worn directly next to the skin or over underwear. Outer clothing also includes:

- Hats
- Scarves
- Shoes or boots

You **must not** ask pupils/students to take off any further items of clothing.

Any such search should be carried out in an appropriate location that offers privacy away from other pupils/students.

Be sensitive to whether a pupil/student is wearing outer clothing for religious reasons when you conduct a search. For example, you should not require a female pupil/student to remove a headscarf she is wearing for religious reasons if your witness is male.

Authorised staff can search lockers, desks and bags in the presence of the pupil/student and another member of staff.

A hand-held security metal detector may be used by authorised staff to support a search. The 'wand' should not make contact with the pupil/student.

Permission does not have to be sought from a parent/carer before a search is carried out, however, following ALL searches, a note will be made on CPOMS/MyConcern and a phone call will be made to parents/carers, even when no unauthorised items have been found except where the police or DSL advise that immediate notification would compromise an investigation or put the child at further risk. In such cases, parents will be informed as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.". The DSL and other relevant staff will also be informed as the pupil/student may potentially be vulnerable.

It may be necessary, on some occasions, to test items such as substances and vapes to see if they are or contain illegal substances. This will be carried out by the Executive Principal / Principal only. In line with the academy behaviour and rewards policy, possession of/use of illegal substances on an academy site can lead to permanent exclusion from school. The police and social care will also be informed.

Conducting a strip search

Academy staff **are not allowed** to carry out strip searches, including the principal and authorised staff. Only police who have been asked to come to the academy may decide whether a search is necessary and carry it out. The police can only carry out a search if they:

- think this is necessary to remove an item related to a criminal offence, **and**
- reasonably consider the pupil/student might have concealed such an item

Strip searches will only be carried out as an exceptional measure of last resort and safeguarding the child will always be the primary role of academy staff.

Academy staff will inform parents/carers prior to this happening unless police advise otherwise related to health and safety. If parents/carers are not in attendance at this time, then the principal should ensure that an 'appropriate adult' is present during the search.

An **appropriate adult** is a person whose role is to safeguard the rights and welfare of children who are suspected of a criminal offence, by ensuring they are treated fairly and are able to participate effectively.

During a strip search

- The police officers conducting a strip search **must** be the same sex as the pupil/student.
- There **must** be at least two people present other than the pupil/student, one of which must be the 'appropriate adult'. The search may only take place without an appropriate adult if:
 - It is an urgent case where there is risk of serious harm to the pupil/student or others, or
 - The pupil/student explicitly states that they do not want an appropriate adult present for the search, and the appropriate adult agrees and signs a record of the pupil's/student's decision.
- The appropriate adult should be the same sex as the pupil/student, unless they specifically request someone else.

Academy staff should always be mindful of their duty of care.

The role of academy staff is to advocate for pupils'/students' wellbeing at all times. A strip search can be highly distressing for the pupil/student, and for staff and other pupils/students affected.

The police **cannot** overrule the safeguarding duty of academy staff, for example by requesting that the appropriate adult leave the room when they talk to the pupil/student. **It is very important that all staff are aware of this.** They will support the pupil/student after any search and will always put safeguarding at the centre when supporting the pupil/student, regardless of whether a prohibited item is found.

Calling the police will be a last resort

Academy staff must always put the best interests of the child first. Before deciding to call the police into the academy, staff must:

- Make sure they have exhausted all other approaches.
- Carefully weigh up the risks to the pupil's/student's mental and physical wellbeing against the need to conduct a search.

The pupil/student should have an opportunity to express their views regarding the search.

If a prohibited item is found or not:

- The matter will be considered as a safeguarding matter as well as a police matter.
- Relevant staff such as the DSL will be involved and will treat the pupil/student as being potentially vulnerable.

If a prohibited item is not found:

- A safeguarding approach will be taken to supporting the pupil/student to cope with the experience of being searched.
- Will consider the wider issues that may have informed the decision to request a search in the first place.

Recording of searches

A record must be made in the academy's safeguarding system (CPOMS/MyConcern) of:

- Any searches for prohibited items (whether or not items were found)
- Any searches conducted by police officers

The record will include all elements required by KCSIE, particularly the follow-up actions and outcomes for the child.

The Executive Principal/Principal will record searches for other items banned by the academy, and this guidance should be followed consistently.

The record should be made as soon as possible following the incident.

The DfE suggests that you record:

- The date, time and location of the search
- Which pupil/student was searched
- Who conducted the search, and any other adults or pupils/students present
- What was being searched for
- The reason for searching
- What items, if any, were found
- What follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search

Analysis of this data will be **carried out half termly by the DSL and reported to the Local Governing Body**. The data should be used, for example to see if any groups are disproportionately subject to searches. Trends should be identified and appropriate responses considered.

Children in possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons should be considered vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. Paragraph 20 of [KCSIE](#) highlights the need to be alert to the potential risks of children who are:

- Showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour
- In challenging family circumstances, such as drug and alcohol misuse
- Misusing drugs or alcohol themselves

A search can play a vital role in identifying pupils/students who may benefit from early help or a referral to the Local Authority children's social care services. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should make an immediate referral if they find evidence that a child is at risk of harm.

You must inform your DSL of any searches that you believe reveal a safeguarding risk, or where you have reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil/student was in possession of a prohibited item.

What can be confiscated?

Authorised staff members can confiscate any item they find that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:

- Poses a risk to staff or pupils/students
- Is a prohibited or banned item
- Is evidence in relation to an offence

What will be done with confiscated items

Different things will happen depending on what the confiscated item is.

Controlled drugs, or substances you suspect are controlled drugs or could be harmful	Deliver to the police (or safely dispose of if there is a good reason to do so)
Alcohol	Retain or dispose of, as appropriate

Vapes	Retain or dispose of, as appropriate
Tobacco or cigarette papers	Retain or dispose of, as appropriate
Fireworks	Retain or dispose of, as appropriate
Stolen items	Deliver to the police, or return to the owner or dispose of (see DfE guidance)
Weapons or items which are evidence of a suspected offence	Deliver to the police as soon as possible
Items that have been (or are likely to be) used to commit an offence or cause injury or property damage	Deliver to the police, return to the owner, retain or dispose of (see DfE guidance)
Pornographic material that you suspect constitutes a specific offence (i.e. it is extreme or an indecent image of a child)	Deliver to the police as soon as possible

For other items banned under academy rules, the following should be considered when deciding whether to return, retain or dispose of the item:

- The value of the item
- Whether returning the item to the owner may place someone at risk of harm, or disrupt learning
- Whether it is appropriate to return the item
- Whether the item can be practically and safely disposed of

You can also confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's/student's property as a disciplinary measure where it is reasonable to do so, as set out in [section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#).

Searching and confiscating electronic devices

Authorised staff members, including the Executive Principal/Principal may examine any data or files on an electronic device that they have confiscated, if they have good reason to do so. Staff should work with parents wherever possible to share the grounds on which they suspect any of the above. This would be if staff reasonably suspect that the device has (or could be used to):

- Cause harm
- Undermine the safe environment of the academy or disrupt learning
- Commit an offence

If you discover inappropriate images, video, or other material, you may delete them if you have good reason to do so. 'Good reason' means you should reasonably suspect that the device has (or could be used to):

- Cause harm
- Undermine the safe environment of the academy and disrupt teaching
- Commit an offence

However, if you have reasonable grounds to suspect that the material may be evidence relating to a specific illegal offence, you must not destroy the material. Instead, hand the device containing the material over to the police as soon as possible.

If you suspect you may find an indecent image or video of a child on a device, avoid viewing it and never copy, share, or save it.

Refer the incident to your DSL and follow the DfE's [guidance](#) on responding to pornographic image-sharing in education settings. Also refer to the academy Safeguarding policy.

If the device holds a recording of a fight, staff will assess whether the recording constitutes evidence of a specific offence. If it does, it should be handed to police. If it doesn't constitute evidence of an offence but violates academy rules, staff can require deletion.

If a pupil/student requires screening

Screening is the use of a walk-through or hand-held metal detector to scan all pupils/students before they enter the school site.

A walk-through device will only be used after consultation with the Police and academy trustees.

A hand-held metal detector will be used only when staff suspect a pupil/student may be hiding an unauthorised item on their person. No contact will be made with the child when this happens (see previous).

You can require pupils/students to undergo screening. However:

- Before considering installing and using any screening technology, schools are encouraged to consult with the local Police, as they may be able to provide advice about whether installing these devices is appropriate.
- All pupils/students and parents will be informed in advance if any screening is to take place on academy site.
- Reasonable adjustments to the screening process will be made where a pupil/student has an identified disability.

A pupil/student may be sanctioned if they refuse to co-operate with a search for a prohibited item, in line with the academy behaviour and rewards policy. This should only happen after seeking co-operation and the refusal is persistent.

The academy will ensure that this policy is communicated to all members of the academy community to make sure that pupils/students, parents and staff know which items may be searched for.

Use of reasonable force

There is no requirement to have a policy on the use of force, however, ACET believes it is good practice to set out the **circumstances in which reasonable force may need to be used and to inform stakeholders that staff have legal power to use reasonable force, if required and without parental consent.** It also considers KCSiE 2025.

When using reasonable force in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEND, mental health problems or with medical conditions, staff must carefully recognise the additional vulnerability of these groups. Staff should also consider the academy's duties under the Equality Act 2010, for example in relation to making reasonable adjustments. By planning positive and proactive behaviour support, for instance through drawing up individual behaviour plans for more vulnerable children, and agreeing them with parents/carers, the academy can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use reasonable force.

ACET believes that any use of reasonable force should be at the discretion of the staff member and should only be used when other strategies have been used, such as use of the voice. Before reasonable force is used, it should be questioned, 'Is it reasonable, proportionate and necessary?'

On the rare occasion where staff are put in situations where they judge the need to use reasonable force or physical restraint to ensure the health and safety of pupils/students, the following guidelines should be adhered to. These guidelines are firmly based on Government advice as outlined in the DfE guidance on the use of reasonable force in schools.

It is also worth noting that schools and academies **should not** have a 'no contact' policy.

By including this information in a policy, it is hoped that our approach to the use of reasonable force is clear to staff, pupils/students and parents/carers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>

What is reasonable force?

ACET actively promotes a positive behaviour strategy that is designed to modify and minimise poor behaviour, however, it may be necessary for staff to use reasonable force to control or restrain a student. **As per the DfE legal guidance, all members of academy staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils/students from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.**

Reasonable force may be used in the interest of pupil/student safety, as outlined by the DfE:

- to protect staff and students.
- to prevent serious breaches to the academy behaviour expectations and code of conduct.
- to prevent serious damage to property.
- to reduce the likelihood of actions by staff being successfully challenged in the courts.

The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils/students.

Force is usually used either to control or restrain and should only be employed as a last resort, when all deescalation strategies have been exhausted. This can range from guiding a pupil/student to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a pupil/student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.

As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils/students and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between students/pupils or blocking a student's/pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil/student by the arm out of a classroom.

Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil/student under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils/students are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.

Academy staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil/student.

Minimising the need to use force

It is important to have a calm, orderly and supportive academy climate that minimises the risk and threat of violence of any kind. Wherever practicable, staff will issue a warning to a pupil/student that force may have to be used before using it.

Staff authorised to use force

All members of academy staff have legal power to use reasonable force. This power applies to any member of staff at the academy.

All teachers and members of staff, who have the principal's authorisation to be in control of or take charge of pupils/students, automatically have the power to use force.

Deciding when to use force

Staff can use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil/student from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Causing personal injury to or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil/student); or
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the academy or among any pupils/students receiving education at the academy, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

****Any force used must be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent.**

The greater the potential for injury, damage or serious disorder, the more likely it is that using force may be justified:

- Pupil/student attack on staff or another pupil/student
- Pupils/students fighting
- Damage to property
- Rough play
- Use of dangerous objects
- Absconding if likely to involve safety

Using force

Wherever possible, staff should tell the pupil/student to stop and be calm and measured. This should be repeated. They should not give the impression of acting out of anger, frustration or punishment. Force should cease quickly. Examples include standing between students, leading by the arm, hand on the centre of the back and finally, appropriate restrictive holds. Staff should always inform the student that it is going to be used unless the student is in or posing direct harm to another.

The degree of force and the time it is applied should be the minimum needed for the pupil/student to regulate or to move the pupil/student to a safe space.

When exercising the power to use force, staff must also take proper account of any special need and/or disability that a pupil/student might have.

Staff working with special needs students will have an awareness of situations that may provoke difficult behaviour, preventative strategies and de-escalation techniques. They will know of any previous incidents and handling strategies that are recommended.

Reasonable force will not be used by ACET staff to search pupils/students for potential weapons unless it is necessary to prevent the pupil/student from harming themselves or others, damaging property or causing disorder. Staff should always seek cooperation first and use force only as a last resort. Any such searches should be reported to the DSL and recorded as a safeguarding concern, not just a behaviour incident.

Prohibited Techniques

Reasonable force will never be used as a punishment.

Staff training

There is no legal requirement for staff to be trained in physical restraint.

Some staff are identified to receive Team Teach training.

There may also be particular needs for staff that work closely with pupils/students with additional needs or disability; however, training will be offered to all staff. Staff should be made aware of this policy and procedures during their induction.

How to record incidents involving the use of force

Every significant incident involving the use of force on a pupil must be recorded on CPOMs/MyConcerns, using the category 'Restrictive Intervention' .

Staff should make the record as soon as possible after the event, and no later than the same day ,setting out a 'full picture' of what happened. If more than 1 member of staff was involved, they should create individual reports rather than collaborate on a single report. Language used should be factual and free of judgement.

What to include:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved.
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code.
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained.
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance.
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

Statements from pupils/students involved may be included.

Emotional support and first Aid should be offered to all those involved in a serious incident that involves the use of force.

Informing Parents/Carers

Parents/carers should always be contacted and informed as soon as possible.

Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate. This could involve a discussion about:

- any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- what de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- what might be done differently in the future
- The academy may use this information to amend any existing behaviour support plans, as needed.

Exceptions to the requirement to report to parents/carers are where:

- the pupil is aged 20 or over; or
- it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

Children that need physical intervention at least twice within a period of six months need a handling plan to run alongside a risk assessment, which would also need to be shared with parents. A copy of the Positive Handling Plan is attached as an Appendix.

Informing Governors

Governing bodies will monitor the appropriate use of restrictive force through the number of incidents being reported in the LGB reports and through Safeguarding visits and audits.

Any complaints raised about the use of reasonable force should be dealt with thoroughly, speedily and appropriately. Any one raising a complaint should refer to page 7 and 8 of the following guidance: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a819959ed915d74e6233224/Use_of_reasonable_force_a_dvice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf

Staff Training

Appropriate staff will receive annual guidance and training about aspects outlined in this policy ensuring they understand their responsibilities and can implement procedures correctly and consistently.

Identified staff members will receive training on the following key areas:

1. Seeking Informed Consent

- How to discuss the need for a search with pupils/students in a calm, professional manner.
- Explaining the reasons for the search clearly, linked to prohibited and unauthorised items.
- Understanding that the preference is always that the pupil/student relinquishes the prohibited item voluntarily.
- How to respond appropriately if a pupil/student refuses to cooperate, including considering why they may be refusing.
- Understanding when sanctions may be appropriate versus when a safeguarding approach is needed.

2. Understanding 'Reasonable Grounds'

- A shared understanding of what is meant by 'reasonable grounds'
- What constitutes 'reasonable grounds' to suspect a pupil/student has prohibited item(s) in the academy
- Examples of reasonable grounds, such as:
 - Hearing the pupil/student or other pupils/students talking about an item.
 - Being told directly of an item.
 - Seeing an item.
 - Noticing a pupil/student behaving in a way that causes suspicion they are concealing an item.
- How to apply 'reasonable grounds' consistently across all situations.

3. Recognising and Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

- Understanding that any pupil/student found in possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons must be treated as vulnerable and at risk of exploitation
- Being alert to potential risks to children who are:
 - Showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour
 - In challenging family circumstances, such as drug and alcohol misuse
 - Misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- The requirement to inform the DSL of ANY searches where there were reasonable grounds to suspect a pupil/student was in possession of a prohibited item, regardless of whether items were found
- How a search can play a vital role in identifying a safeguarding issue

4. Understanding and Avoiding Bias

- Awareness and vigilance about possible biases affecting decisions to carry out or escalate searches
- Understanding how unconscious bias may influence decision-making
- The importance of treating all pupils/students fairly and consistently
- How the academy uses data from the record of searches to monitor whether any groups are disproportionately subject to searches

5. Pupils'/Students' Rights and Privacy

- Understanding that all pupils/students have a right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights
- Recognising that any 'interference' with this right must be justified and proportionate
- Understanding the potential impact of searches on pupils/students, including:
 - Loss of privacy when clothes, bags or possessions are searched
 - Loss of a sense of security
 - Impact on dignity or reputation

6. Conducting Searches Safely and Appropriately

- How to conduct searches while avoiding contact with the pupil/student by asking them to empty pockets, bags etc. onto a surface
- Understanding what constitutes 'outer clothing' that can be removed
- The requirement that searches must be carried out in an appropriate location that offers privacy away from other pupils/students
- Legal requirements: the person carrying out the search must be the same sex as the pupil/student, and there must be another member of staff present as a witness (also same sex if reasonably practicable)
- How to use hand-held metal detectors appropriately without making contact with the pupil/student
- Being sensitive to religious considerations when conducting searches

7. The Absolute Prohibition on Strip Searches

- Clear understanding that academy staff are NOT allowed to carry out strip searches, including the principal and authorised staff
- Only police who have been asked to come to the academy may decide whether a strip search is necessary and carry it out
- The role of academy staff during a strip search is to advocate for pupils'/students' wellbeing at all times and act as an 'appropriate adult'
- Understanding that police cannot overrule the safeguarding duty of academy staff
- The requirement to exhaust all other approaches and carefully weigh up risks before calling the police

8. Recording Requirements

- Understanding that a record must be made in the academy's safeguarding system (CPOMS/MyConcern) of any searches for prohibited items (whether or not items were found) and any searches conducted by police officers
- What information should be recorded, including:
 - Date, time and location
 - Who was involved
 - What was being searched for and why
 - What items were found (if any)
 - Follow-up actions taken
- The requirement to make the record as soon as possible following the incident
- The requirement to contact parents/carers following ALL searches, even when no unauthorised items have been found

9. Handling Confiscated Items

- What to do with different types of confiscated items (drugs, alcohol, weapons, electronic devices, etc.)
- When and how to examine electronic devices and when to delete inappropriate material versus when to hand devices to police
- Understanding that if you suspect you may find an indecent image or video of a child on a device, you should avoid viewing it and never copy, share, or save it
- When to involve police and how to report incidents

10. Use of Reasonable Force

- Understanding that all members of academy staff have legal power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils/students from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder
- What constitutes 'reasonable force' and the range of actions this covers
- When using reasonable force with children with SEND, mental health problems or medical conditions, the need to recognise additional vulnerability and consider reasonable adjustments
- The importance of issuing a warning before using force wherever practicable
- Understanding that force should never be used as punishment and must cease quickly

Appendix 1 Positive Handling Plan

Positive Handling Plan

<i>POSITIVE HANDLING PLAN FOR:</i>		<i>NAME</i>	
Teacher:		Nominated staff member to oversee plan:	
Date written:		To be reviewed on:	Annually (unless behaviours change significantly)

Display of behaviours

Common Triggers

Distressed Behaviours	Crisis Behaviours

Preferred De-escalation Strategies				
Verbal advice Support and reassurance	Planned ignoring	Contingent touch	C.A.L.M. talking Communication, awareness, listening, making safe	Additional Processing time
Time out Offered/directed	Transfer adult (help protocol)	Choices/limits	Success Reminder	Consequences
Humour	Distraction	Reassurance	Remove Audience	Validation (make it bearable)

Personalised de-escalation strategies (including additional detail for those suggested above)

Any medical conditions that need to be considered before/whilst holding?	
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Appropriate handling strategies for physical Intervention	Tick if appropriate
Friendly escort / guide	
Single Elbow Stood / Walking / Seated	
Double Elbow Stood / Walking (DO NOT SEAT IN DOUBLE ELBOW)	
Beanbags	

FREQUENCY/SEVERITY OF RISK (Please highlight a number)	
6	Persistent incidents of non-compliance and severe challenge including dangerous, violent and aggressive behaviour, bullying and assault associated with premeditation, and undermining adult authority. (Occasional high levels of potential violence and high risk behaviours).
5	Hourly incidents of non-compliance and severe challenge including dangerous, violent and aggressive behaviour associated with the loss of emotional control.
4	Daily incidents of non-compliance/challenge including dangerous behaviour associated with impulsiveness, a lack of anticipation and acceptance of consequentially, absconding, ignoring adult support and guidance.
3	Weekly incidents of non-compliance/challenge including aggressive confrontations with others and avoiding adult supervision.
2	Less-than-weekly incidents of non-compliance/challenge associated with mood swings.
1	Normal range of behaviour given age, maturity, emotional difficulty and personal circumstances.

Actions required following an incident:	
Post incident learning with pupil	Following the 3-step process 'Listen, Link, Learn'.
Record details of incident	Complete 'Significant incident report'. Share this with designated member of SLT. Share with parents. Upload to CPOMS.

Parents to be informed in all cases	Inform parents of incident. Ask parent to sign 'Significant Incident Report' and provide them with a copy (Make sure to exclude the names of any other children involved on the parent copy).
Staff de-briefing	Ensure all staff involved have been offered a debrief session.

Signed to show agreement to content of form;	
Headteacher	
SENDCO / Team Teach Lead	
Parent / Carer	
Child (if appropriate)	

Appendix Significant Incident/Physical Intervention Record

2

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT / PHYSICAL INTERVENTION RECORD				
FULL NAME OF YOUNG PERSON:				Class Group:
Does the child have an SEN need, if so what and what level of support is in place:				
DATE: 07/11/2024	LOCATION OF INCIDENT: Corridor			
<p>x</p> <p>ATTEMPTS AT DE-ESCALATION: Humour Verbal Advice and Support Firm Clear Directions Negotiation Limited Choices Distraction Reassurance Planned Ignoring Withdrawal Offered/Directed Swap Adult Contingent touch Success reminders Reminders of Consequences</p>				
<p>DETAILS OF THE BEHAVIOUR REQUIRING USE OF PHYSICAL INTERVENTION: (<i>Why was the hold necessary</i>)</p> <p>Aggression/violence towards staff Aggression/violence towards another child Damage to property Risk of injury to self</p> <p>Please detail the behaviour;</p> <p>became dysregulated within class and threw pencils, the container, books and attempted to throw other objects.</p>				
<p>Possible reasons for behaviour;</p> <p>Support was provided by myself after objects had been thrown. I cannot comment on the trigger for this, but prior to entering the class had been sensory seeking by moving up and down the corridor refusing to enter the classroom.</p>				
<p>FULL NAMES OF ALL STAFF USING INTERVENTION: Lindsey Waugh</p> <p>And other staff members involved/witnessing:</p>				
<p>PHYSICAL INTERVENTION TECHNIQUE USED: <i>Please highlight as necessary.</i></p> <p>Half shield / Single Elbow 1 person / 2 person stood / walking / seated chairs / seated floor seated beanbag / floor</p> <p>Did the hold change? If so from what to what? Caring c guide to escort from room, half shield used when kicking before this then changed to seated floor help hug</p>				
START TIME	DURATION OF Guide /RESTRAINT /	ANY INJURIES	PUPIL RESTRAINT DEBRIEFING	MEDICAL CHECK
1 : 30 Hour Minute	30 seconds x 3	Young Person Other Person	0. Offered Accepted	Offered Accepted

RISK ASSESSMENT	EXTERNAL AGENCIES INFORMED	ADULTS INVOLVED IN PHYSICAL INTERVENTION DE BRIEF COMPLETE.	DETAILS OF ANY INJURIES OR MEDICAL TREATMENT
Risk to: Self Others Property Criminal Offence Absconding Psychological Physical	Medical Staff LA Social Worker LADO	Complete	Name of injured person(s): Nature of Injury: Accident form Completed Yes No
WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE INTERVENTION?			
WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME FROM THE INTERVENTION?			
VIEWS OF THE YOUNG PERSON (obtained during post-incident learning):			
Person Reporting:			
Signature	Date	Print Name	
Parents informed by meeting / telephone (please delete as appropriate)	Signature	Date	
MONITORED BY: Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher	Signature	Date	