

The GLC Policy for Positive Handling

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Directors on :	Spring 2024
This Policy will be reviewed by the GLC Board on :	Spring 2026

GLC Mission Statement

The GLC's mission is to develop active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community.

This will be achieved through:

- High quality teaching that deliberately develops competencies of curiosity, creativity, communication and critical-thinking;
- An inspiring and meaningful curriculum;
- The development of productive relationships by instilling the values of compassion, resilience, responsibility and aspiration to prepare our young people for learning and life;
- A commitment to the wellbeing of our staff;
- A culture of professional generosity, collaboration, challenge and support throughout the GLC;
- The development of effective external partnerships for the benefit and wellbeing of our community.

Equalities Statement

The GLC's commitment to equality is enshrined in our mission statement to develop 'active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community'.

We are a vibrant, innovative and successful organisation: we work hard to be the place of choice to work and to learn. Across the 5 academies of the GLC, we pledge that everyone enjoys an equality of opportunity. We work tirelessly to ensure that individual characteristics including age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation are not discriminated against in any way. We create inclusive environments characterised by mutual respect where difference is celebrated.

The GLC Policy for Positive Handling

At The GLC [Gateway Learning Community] we are committed to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff. Each academy within the [GLC] recognises that there are occasions when the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils is necessary. Members of staff have the legal power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for any prohibited items but not banned items if a student is refusing to be searched. The decision to use reasonable force should be made on a case-by-case basis. The member of staff should consider whether conducting the search will prevent the students harming themselves or others, damaging property or from causing disorder. (see GLC Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy).

About this policy

This policy is in line with current DfE advice: Use of Reasonable Force; Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2013

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444051/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf.

The law allows all adults who are authorised by the Headteacher to be responsible for pupils to use such force as is reasonable to prevent a pupil:

- Committing a criminal offence (or for younger children that which would be an offence)
- Causing personal injury, injury to others or damage to property
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline

Staff should not hesitate to act in these situations provided they follow this policy and the attached guidance; however, they should always satisfy themselves that the action they take would be considered justifiable by a wider audience of their professional colleagues.

Definitions:

- **Control** means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading/guiding a pupil out of a classroom;
- **Restraint** means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. This is used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate, or when a pupil is at risk of hurting themselves or others;
- **Handling** – refers to any physical intervention applied by a member of staff where it necessary to make physical contact with a pupil in order to manage their conduct or ensure their own or others safety. Handling strategies may be restrictive or non-restrictive and include shepherding, guiding, supporting, blocking, confining, holding and, in the most extreme cases, restraining;
- **Reasonable in the circumstances** means using no more force than is needed to control or restrain;
- **Reasonable force** should always be the minimum force needed to regain and ensure safety and control for everyone involved or present.
- Reasonable force covers a broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their careers.

Objectives of using reasonable force/positive handling:

- The key objective in using any form of force or restraint is to maintain the safety of pupils and staff and to maintain good order.
- The use of force or restraint may also be used to prevent serious damage to property.

The key principles are that any physical intervention should be:

- In the interest of the pupil/s;
- Reasonable and proportionate;
- Intended to reduce risk;
- The least intrusive and restrictive of those options available that are likely to be effective.

Our approach: 'Prevention is better than cure'

All GLC academies provide a properly planned and differentiated curriculum that provides appropriate levels of challenge to all pupils and maintain an effective behaviour policy that is known and understood by all staff and pupils. We create calm environments to minimise incidents that may require and physical intervention. We de-escalate incidents when they do arise. Positive Handling is our method of last resort for a tiny minority of situations, after all other approaches have been tried or in situations of clear danger or extreme urgency: **95% of crisis situations can be dealt with through calm, dignified and skilled intervention** [the use of non-confrontational approaches and understanding of messages received from body language are vital].

We utilise only the minimum force required to resolve the situation safely, and ensure that the risks involved in physically intervening are outweighed by the risks of not doing so. How we respond always has regard to the circumstances and to the age and understanding of the child or young person. Staff will 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. No member of staff is required to employ and physical intervention strategy if they are not comfortable or confident to do so effectively.

Minimising the need to use reasonable force:

All staff and volunteers must work together to:

- Create a calm environment that minimises the risk of incidents that might require using force/positive handling;
- use our core skills approaches to teach pupils how to manage conflict;
- undertake measures to find out what factors may be influencing the pupil's behaviour;
- identify early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours are developing;
- de-escalate incidents as they arise;
- only use force/positive handling when the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force/positive handling.

In many circumstances, assertiveness skills and positive strategies can be effectively used to diffuse situations, such as:

- Use of a distracter such as a whistle or loud bell to interrupt the behaviour long enough for other methods of verbal control;
- Withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened;
- Other techniques designed to defuse a situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour, in which case the incident could be dealt with later when emotions are running less high;
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with The GLC's primary and secondary policies on behaviour and relationships.

Staff authorised to use reasonable force/positive handling:

Normally, only staff who have been trained in Safer Handling techniques will restrain pupils, with due regard to recommendations including staff ratios and safety protocols. However, in an emergency situation all staff are authorised to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils, should the need arise, until trained colleagues arrive. All staff must use their professional judgement in deciding at what point to intervene and must always act in the best interests of children. Staff should ensure that adult assistance is requested before any physical intervention, although it is understood that circumstances may lead to the need for intervention prior to the assistance arriving.

When can reasonable force/positive handling be used?

Reasonable force/positive handling can be used where there is a need to:

- to prevent a pupil causing, or being at risk of causing, injury or damage to themselves or others;
- remove a disruptive child from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;

- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
 - prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
 - prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
 - restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.
- DFE July 2013 use of reasonable force*
- To search a student (if they are refusing) for any prohibited items but not banned items as outlined in the behaviour policy. The member of staff should consider whether conducting the search will prevent the students harming themselves or others, damaging property or from causing disorder.

Application of force/positive handling:

- Only the minimum force should be used. As far as possible, staff should not use force/positive handling unless, or until, another responsible adult is present to support;
- Before intervening physically, an adult will, wherever practicable, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop and explain what will happen if he/she does not;
- The adult should continue to communicate with the pupil using positive instructional language and explaining what you want them to do. A calm and measured approach to the situation is needed from the adult. The age and level of understanding of the pupil and the severity of the incident are important factors to consider.
- Staff must always bear in mind their legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and pupils with SEND.
- GLC staff are not expected to put themselves in danger. The GLC does not expect staff to go beyond what is deemed reasonable. It is acceptable for any member of staff to decide that they will not use physical intervention for personal reasons.

Effective positive handling

When positive handling becomes necessary:

DO

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why;
- Use the minimum force necessary;
- Attempt to use body positioning, positive gestures and positive instructional language to guide and coax pupils away from harm;
- Involve another member of staff;
- Block, interpose, and lead pupils to prevent them from injury and/or damage;
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition), and give a clear countdown for this;
- Continue to communicate with the pupil and other staff throughout the incident about what you are doing and give timeframes;
- Use simple and clear language given in a calm manner;
- Use best practice guidance (Safer Handling training) regarding where to place hands and feet when holding or restraining (eg hold limbs above major joints);
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance.

DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control);
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil;
- Attempt to reason with the pupil;
- Involve other pupils in the restraint;
- Touch or hold the pupil in any way other than that necessary to control or restrain, using only the methods from Safer Handling training (for example, no twisting, pulling, bending or forcing);

- Pick up a child;
- Make contact with sexually sensitive areas of the body;
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck, lying face down or pulling arms across the child's chest or lap;
- NEVER use physical intervention strategies as a punishment or to deliberately inflict pain;
- Hit, strike, kick or trip up the pupil.

Recording incidents:

- All incidents that necessitate the use of force/positive handling to control pupils **must be recorded** by all staff member[s] involved as soon as possible (within 24 hours). Each GLC academy will maintain a bound and numbered book. Parents will always be informed of such incidents on the same day.

Staff should:

- Inform a member of SLT as soon as possible;
- Record the facts surrounding the incident carefully, clearly and without judgement on CPOMs;
- If staff/pupils have been injured during the incident this must be recorded on the relevant form and given to the Head of School or Deputy Head of School.

Post-incident support:

Incidents that require the use of force/positive handling can be upsetting for all concerned. It is important that staff and pupils are given emotional support. After incidents have subsided it is important to ensure that staff and pupils are given emotional support and basic first-aid treatment for any injuries. Immediate action should, of course, be taken to ensure that medical help is accessed for any injuries that require other than basic first aid. The school should take action to report any serious injuries to staff or students in accordance with Thurrock LA guidelines.

When supporting staff and pupils, we need to consider thoughts and emotions, including emotional first aid.

Post-incident review:

- Parents/carers of the pupil involved will be included in discussions about further actions and support. A Positive Handling Plan will be implemented, this will include strategies to prevent and deal with recurrence of incidents. Plans will take account of age, gender, additional/special needs and social context;
- A risk assessment and regulation plan may also be completed and shared with staff and parents.
- The Positive Handling Plan will normally be reviewed half termly alongside the strategies and risk assessment but if needed, the individual targets and strategies may be adjusted weekly/fortnightly;
- Staff will be kept informed about pupils who may be at risk to themselves or others through discussions with the relevant staff members.

When completing the Positive Handling Plan, staff and parents/carers should focus on action and behaviours:

- Who did what, when, why, how?
- What was the outcome?
- What does it tell us about what we already know about the young person?
- What have we learnt and what or how does this inform our practice?

Staff training

It is the policy of The GLC that all staff working closely with pupils are trained in the pro-active and responsive behaviour management strategies and, to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the primary and secondary Behaviour & Relationships Policies. Selected staff are trained in Safer Handling through an accredited provider. In cases where a Positive Handling Plan is in operation, selected staff will be identified as the key workers in any physical interventions to be used.

Monitoring use of restrictive physical interventions

Use of physical intervention in school is monitored in order to help staff learn from experience, promote the well-being of children in their care, and provide a basis for appropriate support. Monitoring can help the school to determine what specialist help is needed for children and to assess the appropriateness of the child's placement at the school. The use of physical intervention is monitored and evaluated regularly at Leadership Group meetings and GLC Inclusion Panels. Individual pupil risk assessments are reviewed annually.

Complaints:

- The GLC policy, and involvement of parents when an incident occurs, should help avoid complaints. However, where complaints are made these will be dealt with under the GLC Complaints Procedure.

Physical contact with pupils in other circumstances:

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are times when physical contact with pupils is proper and necessary.

- Some physical contact with pupils may be necessary during PE lessons, when a student is being congratulated or praised, demonstrating how to use a musical instrument, giving first aid, dealing with distressed pupils who may need comforting and pupils with SEND. Staff will use their own professional judgement when they feel a pupil needs this kind of support.
- All staff will operate an equal opportunities approach. Staff are made aware of the appropriateness of physical contact with pupils of all ages. There may be some individuals who find physical contact unwelcome, e.g. those with a different cultural background or those who have been victims of abuse. IEPs, PSPs and care plans for individual pupils may reflect this.