The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy	**Version**	V1
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Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Physical intervention is, by its nature, the moment when a pupil is least able to take in adult input. PACE shapes everything before, during and after a physical intervention so that the relationship survives the incident:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Statutory framework

This policy is in line with Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the use of reasonable force), the DfE's Use of Reasonable Force advice, the DfE's Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention guidance (2019), and KCSIE.

4. Principles

- Physical intervention is always a last resort, used only when there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the pupil, to another person, or — exceptionally — to property in a way that creates a risk.
- Verbal de-escalation, environmental change, distraction and co-regulation are always tried first wherever possible.
- Physical intervention is never used as a sanction or to enforce compliance.
- The minimum reasonable force is used for the shortest possible time.
- Holds, where used, are limited to those taught in a recognised, trauma-informed system in which staff are currently trained.

5. Training

All teaching, support and pastoral staff complete training in a recognised system (such as Team Teach or equivalent) before working unaccompanied with pupils. Training is refreshed at the intervals required by the awarding body, typically every two years. Untrained staff do not undertake planned physical intervention except where there is no alternative to prevent immediate serious harm.

6. Pupil-specific risk plans

Where a pupil has a known pattern of dysregulation that may require physical intervention, a positive handling plan is produced with the pupil, family, SENCO and therapeutic mentor. The plan identifies triggers, early warning signs, regulation strategies that work for the pupil, and — only as a last resort — agreed holds and exits.

7. Recording and review

Every use of physical intervention is recorded the same day on the school's incident log, including: the trigger; the de-escalation attempts made; the technique used; the duration; staff and witnesses present; the pupil's state during and after; and any injuries. Records are reviewed by the Headteacher and the DSL, and shared with parents/carers the same day.

8. Debrief and repair

Every physical intervention is followed by a debrief — first when the pupil is regulated, then with staff, and ultimately as a relational repair conversation. Repair is non-negotiable: an incident is not closed until the relationship has been actively re-established.

9. Banned techniques

Prone restraint, pain-compliance techniques, and any technique that restricts breathing are not used at The New Walk School in any circumstances.

10. Searching, screening and confiscation

The school follows the DfE's Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance. Searches without consent are conducted only by trained staff and only for items listed in statutory guidance; they are recorded and reported to the DSL. Searches involving body searches are not undertaken at the school.

11. Complaints and allegations

Complaints about physical intervention follow the Complaints Policy. Allegations against staff are managed under the Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy and KCSIE Part 4.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.