

## AS2Educate Positive Handling Policy

Reviewed by:	Richard Fihosy
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Review:	Annual
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August 2025	Policy update to reference latest legislations

## **Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of this Positive Handling Policy is to outline the procedures for managing and responding to situations that may require physical intervention at AS2Educate (AS2). The policy ensures that students, staff, parents, and external professionals understand the circumstances under which physical restraint may be used, the methods considered appropriate, and the procedures to follow after an incident.

## **Policy Objectives**

- To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff.
- To provide clear guidelines for the use of force in situations where it is necessary to restrain or physically direct a student.
- To ensure that physical intervention is only used as a last resort, in line with the law and good practice.
- To support staff with clear procedures and training to manage challenging behaviours safely and appropriately.

## **Legislative and Statutory Framework**

This policy follows the guidance from the Department for Education's document: *Use of Reasonable Force (2013)* and is compliant with the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 93)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2025

AS2Educate recognises its obligations under these laws to ensure that any use of force is proportionate, non-discriminatory, and respectful of students' dignity and rights.

### **Definition of Positive Handling**

Positive handling refers to the use of force to control or restrain a student. This can range from minimal physical guidance, such as leading a student by the arm, to more restrictive holds to prevent harm. Positive handling should always be:

- Proportionate: The level of force used should be no more than necessary to prevent harm.
- Reasonable: It should be used in situations where it is reasonable to believe that there is a risk to the safety of the student or others, or to prevent serious disruption.
- Necessary: Physical intervention should only be used when all other de-escalation techniques have failed.

### **When Physical Intervention May Be Used**

Physical intervention may be required when:

- A student is at immediate risk of harming themselves or others.
- A student is causing serious disruption that threatens the safety and order of the environment.
- To prevent a student from damaging property in a way that could lead to harm.
- To guide a student who is refusing to follow an instruction that is directly related to maintaining safety.

### **Principles of Positive Handling**

AS2Educate is committed to maintaining a calm and supportive environment, and staff should always seek to de-escalate situations before they reach a point where physical intervention is required. The following principles guide our approach:

- Least Intrusive Approach: Staff will use the least intrusive methods possible to manage challenging behaviours.
- Verbal Communication: Staff will make every effort to use verbal interventions to resolve situations without physical contact.
- Student Dignity: Any intervention should respect the dignity of the student involved, avoiding unnecessary force and ensuring privacy wherever possible.
- Safety: Physical interventions must prioritise the safety of both the student and staff members involved.
- Last Resort: Physical intervention is used only as a last resort, after all other strategies have been tried or considered.

AS2Educate applies a trauma-informed approach to behaviour management, recognising that past experiences can influence pupil behaviour and responses to stress. Positive handling is therefore approached with sensitivity, respect, and care.

### **Procedures for Physical Intervention**

When physical intervention becomes necessary, the following steps will be followed:

1. **Assess the Situation:** Determine whether physical intervention is necessary or if further de-escalation is possible.
2. **Call for Assistance:** Involve another member of staff to help manage the situation and witness the intervention.
3. **Apply Reasonable Force:** Use the minimum force necessary for the shortest time required to achieve the objective.
4. **Monitoring:** Continuously monitor the student's physical and emotional wellbeing to prevent harm.
5. **Incident Review:** Review the incident and complete a written report.

### **Post-Incident Procedures**

- **Student Welfare:** Ensure the student is calm and supported emotionally and physically.
- **Debriefing:** Conduct a debrief with the student to help them reflect and recover.
- **Staff Debriefing:** Provide support for staff and assess the appropriateness of the intervention.
- **Incident Report:** Record the event and notify senior leadership and parents or carers.
- **Review of Behaviour Plan:** Update the student's plan if necessary.

### **Staff Training**

All staff will receive training in:

- Positive behaviour management
- De-escalation techniques
- Safe physical intervention (as appropriate)

Training is updated regularly, and staff are expected to be familiar with this policy.

### **Working with Parents and Carers**

AS2Educate believes in a partnership approach with families. Parents/carers will be informed of any physical intervention involving their child and involved in post-incident planning.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy is reviewed annually or after a significant incident. Review outcomes will inform training and practice updates.

### **Conclusion**

AS2Educate is committed to ensuring that all students and staff feel safe and supported. The use of positive handling is seen as a necessary but last resort in our efforts to maintain a positive, respectful, and safe learning environment for all.

*This policy should be read in conjunction with the De-escalation Techniques.*

## **Specific De-escalation Techniques for AS2Educate**

De-escalation techniques are essential for preventing the need for physical intervention by helping students regain control of their emotions and behaviours. Below are specific strategies that staff at AS2Educate can use to defuse situations before they escalate to a point where physical restraint or intervention is required.

### 1. Active Listening

- Technique: Allow the student to speak and express their concerns or frustrations without interruption. Use open body language and nodding to show that you are genuinely listening.
- Rationale: Often, students in distress need to feel heard. By allowing them to verbalise their feelings, you can help reduce their emotional intensity.

### 2. Calm Verbal Communication

- Technique: Speak softly, slowly, and clearly, using a low tone of voice. Avoid shouting or raising your voice, even if the student is yelling.
- Rationale: Speaking calmly can help lower the student's emotional arousal and model appropriate behaviour. It also reduces tension and prevents the situation from escalating.

### 3. Empathy and Validation

- Technique: Acknowledge the student's feelings by saying things like, "I can see you're really upset about this" or "It must be frustrating for you."
- Rationale: Validating their emotions helps students feel understood, which can lead to a quicker resolution of the issue. It also reduces defensiveness.

### 4. Provide Choices and Control

- Technique: Offer the student simple, clear choices that give them some control over the situation, such as "Would you prefer to take five minutes in the small room or talk to me about what's going on?"
- Rationale: Giving students options helps them feel empowered and less trapped, which can decrease their stress levels and reduce the likelihood of aggressive behaviour.

### 5. Distraction or Redirection

- Technique: Shift the student's focus away from the source of their frustration by offering a different activity or engaging in a new topic of conversation. You might say, "Let's take a break and go for a walk," or "Why don't we work on that project you were excited about?"

- Rationale: Redirecting a student's attention to a neutral or positive task helps interrupt the cycle of escalation and encourages them to regain emotional control.

#### 6. Time and Space (Cool-Off Time)

- Technique: Suggest a break or time away from the situation, offering a quiet, calm area where the student can retreat. Encourage them to return when they feel ready to talk or re-engage.
- Rationale: Allowing a student time and space to cool down can prevent further escalation and gives them a chance to self-regulate without feeling pressured.

#### 7. Non-Threatening Stance and Body Language

- Technique: Stand at an angle (side-on) rather than directly facing the student, with arms relaxed and open, keeping your posture neutral. Avoid invading their personal space.
- Rationale: Non-confrontational body language reduces perceived threat and can help defuse the situation by showing that you are not trying to dominate or challenge the student.

#### 8. Reframing the Situation

- Technique: Help the student see the situation from a different perspective. For example, if they are upset about a peer's actions, say, "Maybe they didn't realise how that made you feel."
- Rationale: Reframing helps students move away from a fixed, negative viewpoint, potentially reducing their emotional response to the situation.

#### 9. Use of Humour (When Appropriate)

- Technique: A light-hearted comment or humorous observation, carefully timed and delivered, can sometimes defuse tension and help the student break away from their heightened emotional state.
- Rationale: Humour can shift focus and lighten the mood, making it easier for the student to let go of frustration or anger. However, it must be used with caution to ensure it doesn't come across as dismissive.

#### 10. Praise and Positive Reinforcement

- Technique: Acknowledge and reinforce any positive behaviours, even if they are small steps. For example, "I appreciate that you're trying to explain how you feel."
- Rationale: Focusing on positive behaviour helps the student feel supported and can motivate them to continue engaging constructively rather than escalating further.

#### 11. Task Simplification

- Technique: Break down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps, or reduce the demands being placed on the student at that moment. For instance, if a student is frustrated with some work, suggest, “Let’s just focus on the first part for now.”
- Rationale: Overwhelm can often lead to escalation. Simplifying tasks can reduce anxiety and help students regain control.

## 12. Paraphrasing and Reflective Language

- Technique: Paraphrase what the student has said and reflect their feelings back to them: “So you’re saying you’re angry because you feel like no one is listening?”
- Rationale: Reflecting a student’s words and emotions demonstrates that you are listening and understand their point of view. This can help them feel calmer and more open to resolution.

## 13. Clear Boundaries and Expectations

- Technique: Clearly explain what behaviour is expected, while being firm but fair. For instance, “I need you to lower your voice so we can talk.”
- Rationale: Clear, consistent boundaries help students feel safe and understand what is required of them. This can reduce anxiety and prevent challenging behaviour.

## 14. Grounding Techniques

- Technique: Help the student focus on something immediate and sensory to ground them. This could involve asking them to take deep breaths, count to ten, or describe something they see or hear around them.
- Rationale: Grounding techniques can help students who are becoming overwhelmed with emotion to reconnect with the present and reduce their emotional arousal.

## 15. Reassurance and Encouragement

- Technique: Offer reassurance that the situation can be resolved and that you are there to support them. Statements such as “We’ll get through this together” or “It’s okay, we’ll figure this out” can provide comfort.
- Rationale: Students often need reassurance that they are not in trouble or that the situation is manageable. Encouragement can build trust and help them engage in resolving the issue.

## 16. Environment Management

- Technique: If possible, change the environment by reducing noise, lowering the lights, or moving to a quieter space. For instance, move the student to a quiet area of the room or outside if needed.
- Rationale: Environmental factors can contribute to a student's emotional state. Changing the environment can have a calming effect, helping to de-escalate the situation.