

MY OASIS

Therapeutic Alternative Provision

De-Escalation and Positive Handling Policy 2026/2027

Date of Last review: January 2026

Date of Next review: January 2027



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Introduction

My Oasis Therapeutic Alternative Provision (TAP) and Independent School takes seriously its duty of care to students, employees and visitors to the school.

Staff within My Oasis have a duty to look after students in their care, as well as to keep other staff members and visitors to the school safe. Due to this, staff must intervene in order to prevent students from hurting themselves or others when the need to do so may occur. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically, they will follow this Positive Handling Policy when doing so.

A clear and consistent Positive Handling Policy supports students who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties as well as students diagnosed with SEND, given they are more likely to present with challenging behaviours. In addition, follows our principles of mutual respect, care and safety and is in line with our values of treating others with compassion.

At My Oasis, the first and most important consideration is the welfare of the young people in our care. The second is the welfare and protection of the adults at our school.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables staff to use such force as is reasonable. There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force, and staff will have to make an informed decision when restraint may be needed, depending on the specific circumstances.

Before using physical controls, we take effective action to reduce risk by:

- Showing care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and encouraging more positive behaviour choices using reasoning and de-escalation techniques. Students need to feel listened to; therefore, staff will acknowledge how students are feeling to ensure they feel validated and their concerns are heard.
- Giving clear directions for students to stop the harmful behaviour they are presenting with, doing so using a calm and reassuring voice.
- Removing an audience or escorting vulnerable students to a safe place, using positive guidance, to allow them to calm down somewhere less pressured. Students are more likely to show off if they are around their peers and may feel antagonised.
- Making the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.

Asking students what they need from us (if this isn't already written in their plan) and where they would prefer to go to calm down.

- Ensuring that staff know what is happening and call for help where required using walkie-talkies. Staff should be mindful of their positioning when trying to calm down a student who has become dysregulated. Staff should stand around 5 feet away from a student when trying to calm them down before having to use physical restraint to help keep them safe.

Definitions

The term 'positive handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour.

The term 'physical restraint' is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. Physical restraint would only ever be used as a last resort when all other de-escalation strategies have not been successful.

Physical Restraint

At My Oasis, we therefore only use physical restraint when there is no realistic alternative.

As part of our student admission process, a thorough risk assessment is completed with a corresponding Positive Handling Plan (PHP) put into place when deemed necessary. This ensures a safe and supportive environment for all students attending My Oasis. RAs and PHPs are regularly reviewed by staff throughout the student's time with us at My Oasis, and we expect staff to use this document to support them in choosing the safest alternative for physical intervention should this ever be required. Staff are also encouraged to experiment and think creatively about alternatives to physical intervention, which may be effective for each individual student, the better we understand their needs.

The most important consideration is that the action taken is in the best interest of the young person, minimising rather than increasing any associated risks. Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate to the situation, avoiding using force wherever possible. It is determined by staff discretion and individual circumstances regarding what they consider to be reasonable and proportionate.

Physical restraint must only be used in accordance with the following guidelines:

- The young person is in immediate danger of harming themselves or another person, or they are at risk of seriously damaging property - the member of staff should have good grounds for believing this.
- Only the minimum force necessary should always be applied to prevent injury or damage.
- Every effort should be made to secure the presence of other staff before applying restraint. These staff can subsequently act as assistants or witnesses to the situation and support the staff member who has to restrain the student.
- Once safe, the restraint should be relaxed to allow the young person to regain self-control.
- Restraint should always be used as an act of care and control, never for punitive measures.

- Physical restraint should not be used purely to force compliance with staff instructions when there is no immediate danger present to other people and/or property.
- Parents/Carers and a student’s mainstream school should be informed immediately should physical restraint be used on a student. Where appropriate, this should also be discussed with the student following the incident.
- Prior to or during any physical restraint intervention being delivered, staff should speak calmly as a way of reassurance. For example, “I am doing this to keep you safe”.

Responding to Unexpected Emergencies

Even the best planning system cannot cover every eventuality which might occur. The school therefore recognises that there are unexpected or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. An unexpected event may require an emergency response. However, following this event, staff have a duty to reflect on the incident, update the student’s risk assessment and prepare for any similar future incidents occurring. Staff and students may be more likely to be hit by a student during the crisis or come-down stage, as a student may remain angry or upset for up to 1 ½ hours after the event.

Individual Student Risk Assessments and Positive Handling Plans (PHPs)

Risk assessments are required for all students who are on placement at My Oasis, and all staff should consider these to anticipate the possibility of negative events occurring in the future.

When considering a student’s behaviour, staff will think about the following questions:

- Can we anticipate a health and safety risk related to this student’s behaviour?
- Have we gathered sufficient information needed to conduct a risk assessment and develop a Positive Handling Plan if necessary?
- What further steps can we take to prevent dangerous behaviour from developing? Perhaps consider the situation or environment we are taking a student to. Are there any known triggers for individual students that we can anticipate occurring?

- Has this risk assessment and, if necessary, Positive Handling Plan been provided to all staff working with the student?

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. Therefore, all students who have been identified as presenting a risk should have a Positive Handling Plan.

This plan details any strategies which have been found to be effective for that young person, along with any particular responses which are not recommended. Any specific physical techniques which have been found to be useful in the past should be named, along with any warnings about techniques which have been found to be ineffective, which may have previously caused problems.

Information will be gathered by the student's mainstream school, where insufficient information has been provided by the student's mainstream school, a Positive Handling Plan will be completed with parents and carers instead.

Positive Handling Plans should be considered along with the student's EHCP, any SEND and other planning documents relevant to the student. They should take into account age, sex, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special needs and social context.

Post Incident Debrief

Following a serious incident, it is the procedure of My Oasis to offer support to all involved. This is an opportunity for learning, and time needs to be given for following up on incidents so that students have an opportunity to reflect on what happened, express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future, as well as gain and appreciate other people's perspectives regarding the incident.

It is difficult to devise a framework of support that meets the needs of all staff. As individuals, we all vary in how much support we need after an unpleasant incident. A member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) / HR Lead / and/or Therapeutic Lead is therefore expected to talk to the staff and young people involved (if appropriate) following any incidents involving violence.

If members of staff need time to rest or compose themselves, then the Senior Leadership team will make arrangements for the staff member to be supported.

Recording, Monitoring and Evaluation

All incidents of unacceptable behaviour must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and documented on CPOMS.

Where physical intervention or significant physical contact takes place, staff are required to:

- Inform the DSL or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) immediately so that safeguarding concerns can be addressed without delay.
- Record the incident on CPOMS promptly, ensuring a clear, factual, and comprehensive account.

Records of serious incidents, including those involving restraint, must include:

- The de-escalation strategies were attempted.
- A detailed description of the incident.
- Signed witness statements (where applicable).
- Any further relevant information.

The SLT will review each incident, ensure the report is complete, and take appropriate follow-up action as required.

Parents and Carers

All parents and carers will be invited to contribute to their child's risk assessment and Positive Handling Plan, with a written parental agreement forming part of this.

During induction, parents and carers will be informed of the school's policies, which are located on the My Oasis website. Also, they will always be informed following the occurrence of any serious incidents as soon as practicable.

Complaints and Allegations

Any complaints will follow the school's Complaints Procedure.

Other Physical Contact with Students

This approach is consistent with the DfE's guidance on the use of reasonable force (2013) and aligns with the updated draft guidance (2024), which emphasises the importance of safeguarding, de-escalation and proportionality and ensuring that all physical contact is always in the best interests of the student.

It is not illegal to touch a student. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a student is proper and necessary. Any such contact must always be appropriate, proportionate, and sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Examples of where touching a student might be proper and necessary:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when walking together.
- When comforting a distressed student.
- When a student is being congratulated or praised.
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.
- To give first aid.

This list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where physical contact is proper and necessary.

All our other Policies will be incorporated into the support and care which is used to address each young person's needs, such as our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Behaviour Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

Staff training

Our aim is for all staff at My Oasis to receive accredited Team Teach training. This ensures that staff:

- Understand the principles of positive handling, including the hierarchy of responses (de-escalation → crisis management → restoration).
- Are confident in using safe, approved physical intervention techniques when absolutely necessary.
- Apply all interventions in accordance with safeguarding, dignity and proportionality.

For staff not yet trained, their role is to:

- Maintain a calm and safe environment.
- Seek immediate assistance from a trained colleague.
- Use verbal and non-verbal de-escalation strategies.
- Physically intervene only if immediate safety is at risk and no trained member of staff is available.

All staff are required to:

- Follow My Oasis reporting procedures.
- Attend regular refreshers or debriefs following incidents.
- Reflect on practice and contribute to post-incident learning.

De-escalation Strategies and Techniques

My Oasis staff are trained to recognise early signs of anxiety, frustration or distress and employ appropriate de-escalation strategies before behaviour escalates. We use models such as the SCARF model (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness) and Team Teach calming techniques. Staff pay particular attention to the needs of students with SEND, communication difficulties, or trauma histories, recognising they may experience heightened anxiety or sensory sensitivities.

Legislation and Governance Framework

This policy aligns with the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Sections 93 & 93A) – authorises staff to use reasonable force where necessary.
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004 – the child’s welfare is paramount.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 – duty to maintain a safe working environment.
- Human Rights Act 1998 – respect for dignity, physical integrity, and protection from degrading treatment.
- Equality Act 2010 – duty to make reasonable adjustments and avoid discriminatory practices.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- DfE Guidance: Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (2013, updated January 2025) – statutory framework for schools.
- Revised DfE Guidance (in consultation, 2025) – introducing a statutory duty (effective September 2025) to: Record every significant incident involving force or restrictive intervention. Notify parents/carers as soon as practicable following any such incident.

Linked Policies and Documents

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually, or sooner if deemed necessary.
- Evaluated through behaviour audits, staff feedback, and safeguarding reports.
- Updated in line with DfE statutory guidance and standards.