



Gateways Education & Wellbeing Ltd

Paving the Way to Success



Gateways
Alternative Provision
Learning your way



Gateways Tuition
Confidence through learning

Positive Handling Policy

Policy owner:	Director
Positive handling lead:	Director / nominated positive handling lead
Approved by:	Director / Leadership Team
Date approved:	02/05/2026
Review date:	02/05/2027
Applies to:	All staff, tutors, volunteers, learners, contractors and visitors

1. Purpose

Gateways Education and Wellbeing Limited is committed to providing a safe, nurturing and trauma-informed environment for children and young people, staff and visitors. This policy sets out Gateways' approach to positive handling, reasonable force and restrictive intervention. It confirms that physical intervention will only ever be used as a last resort, where it is necessary, reasonable and proportionate to prevent immediate harm, and where de-escalation strategies have been attempted or would be unsafe or impractical in the circumstances.

Gateways will always seek to understand behaviour as communication and will prioritise prevention, early support, co-regulation, de-escalation and individualised planning.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Gateways provision, including on-site sessions, alternative provision, tuition, outreach provision delivered in schools or community venues, home-based provision where commissioned and risk assessed, online or hybrid provision where relevant, and Gateways-led trips or outings.

This policy applies to all staff, tutors, volunteers, learners, contractors and visitors. It should be read alongside Gateways' safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety, risk assessment, SEND, first aid, complaints, and accident/incident reporting procedures.

3. Legal and guidance framework

Gateways' positive handling arrangements are informed by:

- the Education and Inspections Act 2006, including section 93 on the use of reasonable force by school staff and authorised persons;
- Department for Education guidance on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education and wider safeguarding duties to protect children from harm;
- the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, including the duty to safeguard and promote welfare;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated health and safety duties;
- the Equality Act 2010, including duties relating to disability, non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments;
- the Human Rights Act 1998, including respect for dignity, safety, liberty and private life; and
- relevant Ofsted expectations for safeguarding, behaviour, leadership, record keeping and risk management where applicable.

Although Gateways is a non-school alternative provision, it will work in line with relevant school guidance, safeguarding expectations and good practice principles for safe, proportionate and accountable practice.

4. Definitions

Positive handling: a broad term used to describe supportive physical contact, guidance or intervention used to keep a child or young person safe, maintain dignity and prevent harm. It must never be used as punishment or for staff convenience.

Reasonable force: force that is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances, using no more force than is needed and only for as long as is necessary.

Restrictive intervention: any action that restricts a child or young person's movement or liberty to prevent harm. This includes physical restraint and other restrictions and must always be carefully assessed, recorded and reviewed.

De-escalation: the use of calm, planned and responsive strategies to reduce distress, anxiety, conflict or risk without physical intervention.

Dynamic risk assessment: the ongoing professional judgement staff make during an incident, considering immediate risk, available support, safer alternatives and the least restrictive option.

5. Core principles

- Positive handling will only be used as a last resort when a child or young person poses an immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, or where statutory grounds apply, and no safer alternative is available.
- Staff will always seek to de-escalate first, unless delay increases the risk of harm.

- The least amount of force will be used for the minimum amount of time.
- Any intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, necessary and in the child or young person's best interests.
- Positive handling will never be used as a punishment, threat, sanction, humiliation, retaliation, or to force compliance where there is no immediate risk of harm.
- Staff will consider the child or young person's age, size, communication needs, trauma history, disability, SEND, medical needs, mental health needs and known triggers.
- Staff will preserve dignity and privacy as far as possible and will continue to speak calmly and respectfully throughout.
- Every incident will be recorded, reported, reviewed and used to inform future planning and support.

6. Training and authorised staff

Key Gateways staff have been trained in positive handling. Gateways will maintain a record of staff training, including the training provider, date completed, expiry or refresher date, and the techniques covered.

Where positive handling is foreseeable for a child or young person, Gateways will ensure that appropriately trained staff are identified within the individual risk assessment, behaviour support plan or positive handling plan. Staff who have not received positive handling training should not use planned restrictive interventions but may take emergency action where it is necessary to prevent immediate serious harm and there is no safer alternative.

Training does not give staff permission to use force routinely. It assists staff in proactively preventing incidents, identifying early warning indicators, employing de-escalation techniques, and, when required, intervening in a safe, lawful, and proportionate manner.

7. Prevention and de-escalation

Gateways will prioritise preventative and proactive approaches to reduce the likelihood of crisis. This may include:

- gathering information from parents/carers, schools, local authorities and professionals before placement starts;
- completing individual risk assessments and identifying known triggers, early warning signs and protective factors;
- using predictable routines, visual supports, sensory adjustments, safe spaces and reduced demands where appropriate;
- using calm language, limited choices, processing time, humour or distraction where appropriate, and co-regulation;
- reducing audience, noise, pressure and confrontation;
- offering time out, movement breaks, sensory regulation, trusted adult support or a change of activity;
- avoiding unnecessary physical contact and avoiding approaches that may increase distress; and
- reviewing patterns after incidents to adapt provision and support.

8. Circumstances where positive handling may be used

Positive handling may only be considered where it is necessary to prevent harm and where less restrictive options have failed, are likely to fail, or would increase danger. Examples may include:

- preventing a child or young person from seriously injuring themselves;
- preventing a child or young person from injuring another learner, member of staff or visitor;
- preventing a serious assault or fight;
- preventing a child or young person from running into immediate danger, such as traffic or an unsafe area;
- preventing significant damage where that damage creates an immediate risk of harm; and
- responding to an emergency where failure to act would place the child or others at risk.

The decision to intervene will be based on professional judgement, the individual risk assessment, the child or young person's known needs, the immediate risk, available support and the safest possible response.

9. Prohibited practice

Gateways staff must not:

- use force as punishment, discipline, retaliation or because a learner is refusing to follow an instruction where there is no immediate risk of harm;
- use pain-inducing, dangerous or degrading techniques;
- hold a child or young person in a way that restricts breathing, impacts the neck, chest or airway, or places them at risk of positional asphyxia;
- deliberately trip, push, pull, drag or lift a child or young person in an unsafe way;
- use seclusion or locked isolation;
- use blanket restrictions that are not individually assessed and justified; or
- continue an intervention after the immediate risk has reduced.

10. Individual risk assessment and positive handling plans

Where there is a known or foreseeable risk that positive handling may be required, Gateways will complete an individual risk assessment and, where appropriate, a positive handling plan. This will be developed using information from the learner, parent/carer, referring school, local authority and relevant professionals.

Plans should include known triggers, early warning signs, preferred de-escalation strategies, communication needs, sensory needs, medical considerations, any contraindicated holds or actions, trusted adults, safe spaces, supervision arrangements, post-incident support and review arrangements.

Plans must be reviewed after any incident, when new information is received, when risk changes, and at least in line with the agreed review cycle.

11. Procedure during an incident

Where an incident occurs, staff should:

1. stay calm, make a dynamic risk assessment and summon support where possible;
2. reduce demands, audience, noise and confrontation;
3. use de-escalation strategies and give the child or young person time to process;
4. clearly state the concern and the safer option available;
5. only use positive handling where necessary to prevent immediate harm;
6. use the least restrictive method, the least amount of force and the minimum time required;
7. monitor breathing, colour, distress, injury, communication and any medical concerns throughout;
8. release or reduce the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so;
9. support recovery and avoid immediate re-escalation through questioning or sanction; and
10. seek first aid or emergency support where required.

12. After an incident: recovery, reporting and review

Following any use of positive handling or reasonable force, Gateways will ensure the child or young person is supported to recover and regulate. Staff will check for injuries, provide first aid where required and arrange medical support where necessary.

The incident will be recorded as soon as possible and before the end of the working day wherever practicable. Records should include:

- date, time, location and people present;
- what happened before the incident, including triggers and de-escalation attempted;
- the risk identified and why physical intervention was considered necessary;
- the type of intervention used, by whom, and for how long;
- how the intervention was monitored and ended;
- any injuries, first aid or medical attention;
- views of the child or young person where appropriate and possible;
- parent/carers and commissioner notifications;
- staff debrief and wellbeing support; and
- learning points, changes to risk assessment and further actions.

13. Informing parents/carers, schools and commissioners

Parents/carers will be informed as soon as reasonably possible after any significant incident involving positive handling or reasonable force. Where a learner attends Gateways through a school, local authority or other commissioner, the relevant contact will also be informed in line with information-sharing and safeguarding procedures.

Where the incident raises a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed immediately, and the safeguarding procedure will be followed. Where required, Gateways will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer, social care, police or medical professionals.

14. Learner voice and complaints

Children and young people should be supported to share their views after an incident in a way that is appropriate to their age, communication needs and emotional state. This may include verbal discussion, visuals, written communication, restorative work or support from a trusted adult.

Parents/carers and learners may raise concerns through the Gateways complaints procedure. Any allegation about staff conduct will be managed through safeguarding and allegation management procedures.

15. Monitoring, quality assurance and review

The Director and leadership team will monitor positive handling records to identify patterns, repeated triggers, training needs, safeguarding concerns, environmental factors and opportunities to reduce future incidents. Data will be used to improve practice and support, not to blame children or young people for distress-related behaviour.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or guidance changes, following a serious incident, following safeguarding advice, or where monitoring identifies the need for change.

16. Useful links

- [Education and Inspections Act 2006, section 93](#)
- [DfE: Use of reasonable force in schools](#)
- [DfE: Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

17. Policy approval

Approved by:	Carly Mason
Role:	Director
Date:	02/05/2026
Next review due:	02/05/2027