



March 2025  
Review March 2026

Note to governors: No changes

## **Rationale**

At Westhoughton High School we **LEARN**:

Look after each other

Enjoy our school

Aim high

Respect ourselves, each other and our environment

Never stop learning

As a community committed to Learning, we believe that:

**“All students have a right to learn and all teachers have a right to teach”.**

We believe that because every child matters, that every child should be allowed to achieve their maximum potential. Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to encourage all students to maximise both their academic and social development.

It is vital that all of our school community – governors, teachers, associate staff, students, parents/carers, outside agencies – works together to ensure that our School provides a safe, pleasant, stimulating, friendly and caring environment in which everyone can flourish and be happy. To do this it is necessary to have a clear statement of expectations which are understood and accepted by the whole Learning Community.

We believe that by setting high standards and promoting good behaviour, we are working towards the development of self-discipline in students. We believe that by providing a calm, orderly atmosphere where boundaries are clearly set out, we can achieve our goals, enabling our students to flourish and develop their abilities and skills to the full.

## **Physical Intervention**

There are occasions when students will seriously challenge the boundaries set out in the RESPECT to LEARN Code. On these occasions it is the responsibility of the staff to ensure that order is maintained and thus ensure that the safety of all students remains a priority. The school has clear policies, procedures and staff training in place to promote positive behaviour and prevent poor behaviour. It is the aim of our school to avoid any physical intervention whatsoever and de-escalate all incidents by using a wide range of alternative strategies.

However, there may be some occasions when force is used – either to control students or to restrain them. Control can mean either passive physical contact (e.g. standing between students) or active physical contact (leading a student by the hand or arm or ushering a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back).

If students are fighting, staff will instruct them to stop fighting in a clear manner. Staff will give both students a firm and unequivocal verbal indication that these actions must cease immediately. A member of staff has a discretionary power to use force in such situations but not a duty to intervene or put themselves at risk. If a member of staff feels that they may put themselves or others in danger, they will NOT be required to physically intervene, although they will still actively seek additional support.

A member of staff would not be seen to be failing in their duty of care by not using force to prevent injury, if doing so threatened their own safety. Should a member of staff feel that it is appropriate to physically intervene, after issuing a verbal warning to stop fighting, then they may do so.

Some examples of situations where reasonable force might be used are:

- To prevent a student from attacking another student or member of staff, or to stop a fight
- To prevent deliberate damage to property
- To prevent a student causing injury or damage by accident, rough play or mis-use of dangerous materials or objects
- To ensure a student leaves a classroom where the student has persistently refused to follow an instruction to do so and their continued presence in a classroom is unsafe.
- To prevent a student behaving in a way that seriously risks harm to themselves or others.

The power may be used where students (including those from another school) are on school premises or elsewhere under the lawful control or charge of a member of staff (e.g. on a school visit).

All school staff members have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent students from committing a criminal offence, putting themselves or others at risk e.g. by injuring themselves or others or damaging property, and to maintain good order and discipline.

Where a situation escalates and other strategies have not been successful or are not deemed appropriate, staff who have completed appropriate training may take the decision to carry out actions requiring physical intervention.

Documentation is completed following any incident (Appendix 1) and parents will always be informed of the need to use physical intervention and invited into the school to discuss the incident fully with appropriately informed staff.

When a student has been identified as requiring physical intervention, it is paramount that this action is the last resort, and that all other de-escalation strategies have been exhausted. The school will make individual risk assessments where it is known that force is more likely to be necessary to restrain a particular student or where a student's SEND is associated with extreme behaviour. The physical intervention will be the minimum requirement and will last for the shortest possible length of time. Staff using physical intervention will (except in exceptional circumstances) operate in pairs in order to support each other and explore other de-escalation strategies before physically intervening. This approach should help to minimise the magnitude of the incident

On occasions there may be some marking or bruising. Key staff trained to physically intervene have been trained to use a recognised 'holds'. If marks are left, it will show a small row of bruising where fingers were holding the student. These marks will be on the forearm, or just above the wrist, where all the holds are made.

Although preferential to operate in pairs, the nature of the incident may necessitate that on some occasions, staff intervene on their own, as it may be wholly inappropriate to wait for a second member of staff to arrive. On all occasions this judgement will require careful consideration, and the professional response will be gauged by balancing all aspects of safety requirements in the incident.

On all occasions where physical intervention is required, parents will always be invited into school to discuss the situation with a member of appropriately informed staff. An incident report will also be completed, with one copy issued to parents/carers and one copy kept on the student's file.

Following an incident, the member of staff involved will be expected to give a debrief to another colleague – ideally the designated safeguarding lead or a member of the senior leadership team. The nature of the debrief is to ascertain the details of the incident, but also to support the member of staff following their potentially stressful encounter.

Physical intervention must never be used as a form of punishment. Staff training is reviewed every two years.

### ***Physical Searching***

It is important to remember that the principle around physical searching is that we search not to find, but to find there is no threat present. And potentially we deter, we reduce risk and we keep all students and staff safe.

#### **Who can search students?**

Only staff authorised by the Head Teacher who have received appropriate training are permitted to search pupils for prohibited items (list of authorised staff available from the DSL Team or the school office).

The member of staff searching the student **MUST** be of the same sex as the student. There must **ALWAYS** be a witness member of staff, and where practicable should also be of the same sex as the student. In exceptional circumstances when it is necessary to conduct a search of a pupil of the opposite sex or in the absence of a witness, the member of staff conducting the search should bear in mind that a pupil's expectation of privacy. If a member of staff who is of the opposite sex conducts the search it must be clearly documented in the recording information sheet the reasons for this.

#### **When can staff search students, and what for?**

Authorised staff can search students if they have reasonable, proportionate and justified grounds for suspecting that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item (outlined in the school respect to learn policy).

There are 3 types of searches:

Reactive – This is following intelligence that a student has a prohibited item on them.

Proactive Search – This is when there is an agreed plan that a student will be searched at particular times.

Proactive search (random) – This is when there are random agreed searches conducted.

DfE Guidance (Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools ) states that:

#### **With consent:**

“School staff can search pupils with their consent for any item. If a member of staff suspects a pupil has a banned item in his/her possession, they can instruct the pupil to turn out his or her pockets or bag and if the pupil refuses, the teacher can apply an appropriate punishment as set out in the school's respect to learn policy. Schools are not required to have formal written consent from the pupil for this sort of search – it is enough for the teacher to ask the pupil to turn out his or her pockets or if the teacher can look in the pupil's bag or locker and for the pupil to agree.”

**Without consent:**

The following items are prohibited at Westhoughton High School as stated in the Respect to Learn Policy and can be searched for without consent:

Fire lighting equipment: Matches, lighters, etc.

Drugs and smoking equipment:

- Cigarettes
- Tobacco
- Cigarette papers
- Electronic cigarettes (e-cigs/vapes)
- Alcohol
- Solvents
- Any form of illegal drugs
- Any other drugs, except medicines covered by the prescribed medicines procedure

Weapons and other dangerous implements or substances:

- Knives
- Razors
- Catapults
- Guns (including replicas and BB guns)
- Laser pens
- Knuckle dusters and studded arm bands
- Pepper sprays and gas canisters
- Fireworks
- Dangerous chemicals

• Other items:

- Caffeinated energy drinks
- Offensive materials (i.e. pornographic, homophobic, racist, etc.)
- Aerosols including deodorant and hair spray

School staff can “only undertake a search without consent if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a pupil may have in his or her possession a prohibited item. The

member of staff must decide in each particular case what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion. For example, they may have heard other pupils talking about the item or they might notice a pupil behaving in a way that causes them to suspect that the pupil is concealing a prohibited item.”

### **How the search is to be conducted?**

What the law says:

- The person conducting the search may not require the pupil to remove any clothing other than outer clothing.
- ‘Outer clothing’ means clothing that is not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear but ‘outer clothing’ includes hats; shoes; boots; gloves and scarves.
- ‘Possessions’ means any goods over which the pupil has or appears to have control – this includes desks, lockers and bags.
- A pupil’s possessions can only be searched in the presence of the pupil and another member of staff, except where there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not conducted immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

Also note:

- The power to search without consent enables a personal search, involving removal of outer clothing and searching of pockets; but not an intimate search going further than that, which only a person with more extensive powers (e.g. a police officer) can do.

- If a pupil does not consent to a search then it is possible to conduct a search without consent but only for the “prohibited items” listed above. Unless there is an immediate danger if a student refuses consent they should be supervised with their possessions (coat/bag etc.) and parents should be contacted to come to school and assist. It may be necessary to contact the police to assist with a search if the situation presents a significant risk or concern and the student refuses consent.

### **Confiscated items:**

Any items deemed prohibited by school should be confiscated when found during the search. Items must be placed in a sealed bag or container and stored or disposed of appropriately. Alcohol and tobacco products will be disposed of and should not be returned to the student. Controlled Drugs must be delivered to the police as soon as possible, or disposed of if advised to do so by the police. Other substances that are not deemed as controlled drugs are to be disposed of. Stolen items are to be delivered to the police or the rightful owner, whichever is the most appropriate. If pornographic images are found, they must be disposed of, unless they believe that the possession of the image is a specified offence (i.e. extreme porn or child pornography). In this case, a member of the DSL must be informed for further advice/action to be taken. Any weapons found must be stored appropriately until they can be handed over to the police.

Items disposed of must be done so with another staff witness and this is to be clearly recorded on the information record sheet.

### **Recording a search of a student:**

All searches must be recorded on an Information Record Sheet and uploaded to CPOMs as soon as possible.

**Informing parents/carers:**

Schools are not legally required to inform parents before a search takes place or to seek parental consent prior to a search being conducted. However, Westhoughton High school will inform parents where a search has been conducted, whether or not harmful or banned items are found. Parents/carers must be informed of the search either by phone or synergy message, whichever is most appropriate. It will be for staff to decide if and whether to return confiscated items to parents if they are not part of the guidance above.

**Bladed items and firearms**

If we believe that a student is carrying a knife or firearm and following a Dynamic Risk Assessment it is believed that if searched by a member of staff, this could potentially place both the staff and students at immediate risk, staff should contact the police by calling 999. State to the call handler that we have sufficient grounds to believe that a student has a potentially lethal weapon on their person and following a risk assessment we feel that it would pose a high risk of immediate danger to both staff and students if they were searched, therefore we are requesting an officer to attend and support. If they refuse to send an officer, ask for a log number and ask them to record that they are refusing to send an officer and the reasons why. Staff should then log this and discuss with a DSL or the Head Teacher to agree next steps.

## APPENDIX 1: RECORDING INFORMATION SHEET



### Use of Physical Intervention in school

Student:	Date:
Year:	Witnesses (staff):
Staff:	Witnesses (students):
Subject:	Physical Restraint used? (if yes, please turn over and complete)
Time:	
Causes/Preceding event / de-escalation strategies tried previously:	
Incident:	
Action taken/sanctions applied/follow-up information:	



Reasons	Yes/No	Comments
Self-Harm		
Harming Others		
Harming Staff		
Damaging Property		
Serious Disruption		
Other		

Counselling for student		
Counselling for other Students		
SLT follow-up with staff		

Signed.....

Date .....

## APPENDIX 2: RECORDING INFORMATION SHEET



### Searching of a Pupil in School

Student:	Date and time:
Year:	Type of search: Reactive: Proactive: Proactive (Random):
Member of staff conducting search:	Witness (member of staff)
Consent from student to search? Yes/No	
Reason for search:	
Any additional relevant information:	
Was the metal detecting wand used during the search? Yes/No	
Prohibited items found: Yes/No (If yes, please state item found)	
If item found what has happened to the item:	
Has the incident been reported to the police? Yes/No (if yes, please state crime reference number)	
Have parents/carers been informed? Yes/No (if no, please state the reason)	
Date and time parents informed:	By who?
Action taken/sanction applied/follow-up information:	
Date uploaded and logged on CPOMs:	

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Member of staff conducting search)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Witness member of staff)