

Policy: Managing a Behaviour Crisis and Using Safety Interventions

Reviewed: Term 2 2025

Next review: Term 2 2026

Mid-year updates:

Policy Monitoring

Libra Policies are reviewed when the need arises in line with legislation updates, guidance, and useful information we receive in order to improve and enhance our provision. Additionally, Policies are updated annually by relevant members of staff and the Senior Leadership Team.

Equality Statement

We believe that this policy is in line with the Equality Act as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any child or member of staff, and it helps to promote equality at this school.

We all have a responsibility to ensure equality permeates into all aspects of school life and that everyone is treated equally irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We want everyone connected with this school to feel safe, secure, valued and of equal worth. We acknowledge the findings of the Race Disparity Audit that clearly shows how people of different ethnicities are treated across the public services of health, education, employment and the criminal justice system.

We wish to work closely with the School Council and to hear their views and opinions as we acknowledge and support Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should be encouraged to form and to express their views.

Introduction

The children placed at the Libra School all have EHCPs which identify social, emotional, and behavioural as the main need of the child. Most children present with complex behaviours that can be very physically aggressive and which pose a threat to the wellbeing of staff, other children, and the child themselves. It is these behaviours that have resulted in most children having multiple and ultimately permanent exclusions from their mainstream schools. This policy draws on theory and research from the fields of neuroscience, attachment, trauma, adverse childhood experience, and restorative approaches.

Unhelpful, harmful, aggressive and generally dysregulated behaviour is usually the result of strong emotions which have been triggered in the moment, or which underpin adaptive behaviours. To maintain a calm learning environment and to support children to process their feelings and emotions to regulate their behaviour, school adults aim to regulate them in the moment and provide them with experiences which will support the development of regulation. When children experience strong emotions, they need to be co-regulated to support them to calm. Our children need repeated experiences of being co-regulated to be able to regulate themselves. Many of our children have experienced trauma so tend to experience high levels of dysregulation which needs understanding and an attuned responsive co-regulation by our school adults. To be able to regulate, children need to integrate their physical sensations, emotions and thinking. Attuning and validating by our school adults enables children to understand their feelings and emotions, to know they are accepted and valid and to connect them to an emotional vocabulary through which they can express and learn to think about those feelings and emotions.

It is unfortunately inevitable however given the needs of our children, that some children find it impossible to regulate their behaviours themselves initially until they have learned the necessary skills. Managing this crisis therapeutically whilst at the same time keeping staff, other children, and the child safe is what this policy and supporting policy documents aim to achieve.

Aims and Objectives:

- To create a positive whole school ethos and policy to managing crises and using safety interventions
- To provide a clear framework for managing crises and using safety intervention consistently.
- To function as a guide to practice and provide clarity as to how all children will be kept safe, cared for, belong, included, and supported to learn.
- To outline clear expectations for behaviour and clear pathways for resolving difficulties.

- To identify what relational provision is available for our children.
- To act as a platform for school adults training and development.

This policy is based on the following values and beliefs:

- High levels of nurture and empathy, with containment and structure, support children to feel safe. Children need clear boundaries, predictable routines, expectations, and regulated responses to behaviour.
- Natural consequences that can follow certain behaviours should be made explicit, without the need to enforce sanctions that can shame and ostracize children from their peers, school community and family, leading to potentially more negative behaviour. Responses to behaviour should ensure that children feel safe and that all needs are met.
- Behaviour is often a form of communication and the expression of underlying needs. It is not possible to support a child's behaviour without addressing these needs.
- Children need personalised responses to support their personal development and well-being. Consistency does not mean always responding in the same way to each child or behaviour, it means responding in a way which is consistent with our values and beliefs. Whilst each individual child benefits from a consistent approach, being consistent and fair is not about everyone getting the same, but everyone getting what they need.
- Relational, regulatory, and restorative approaches are more effective in supporting the development of internal control and regulation. Not all behaviours are a matter of choice and therefore external control will not be effective in changing behaviour.
- Punitive approaches and exclusion may re-traumatise children and further embed the behaviours causing concern. Theory and research on attachment, neuroscience and adverse childhood experiences advocate the use of relational and restorative approaches rather than those that are behaviourist and punitive.

Managing a Crisis

Once a child is dysregulated (mobilisation or immobilisation), their social engagement system has shut down and attempts at social interaction will be met with a defensive response. Therefore, adults ensure that social demand is reduced. School adults remain present and provide the child with attunement and safety cues through their expression, movement, and tone. School adults reduce language demand and ensure that they do not ask questions or give lots of choices. Any directions given are clear and not overly wordy, relying on routine as well as regulating and soothing activities, if possible, at these times. When a child is behaving in a way which means that they or others are not safe, then making the situation safe is the primary need for both child and school adults.

Sometimes our children are so distressed that they present behaviour which significantly puts at risk the safety of themselves and others and sometimes threatens serious damage to the fabric of the buildings. At such times, and as a last resort, school adults may have to use safety intervention to achieve physical containment to maintain the safety of the child, others or to prevent criminal damage to the buildings.

The Libra School has chosen to adopt a method of de-escalation and safety intervention that is accredited by BILD (British Institute for Learning Difficulties). Libra employs two instructors who are qualified as certified CPI Safety intervention master instructors to deliver this training. Their registration is subject to annual assessment. The instructors are currently registered to teach using the CPI Safety intervention programme.

Libra selected CPI Safety intervention training as it is a comprehensive foundation course in dealing with confrontation, aggression and violence for people who work in a care or education environment, with the aim of protecting the rights, dignity, and safety of both the children in our care and the school adults who work with them.

The CPI Safety intervention programme complies with the requirements of current DfE regulations and Department of Education guidance as well as Health and Safety legislation, and the overall framework of civil and criminal law.

In addition, the school also uses the National Federation for Personal Safety (NFPS) Prevention programme and we employ a member of staff qualified to deliver this training who is required to undergo annual assessment.

The NFPS programme delivers additional instructor training around the use of physical intervention and specifically the use of escorts to move children when required as well as promoting training to reduce the need for safety intervention in our environment through conflict management and communications skills training. Through the

NFPS training, the trainer is qualified to train staff on the use of adapted holds to ensure that they are effective and safe within the school's environment. It focuses on communication skills and how these can be used both to avoid conflict and to resolve problems once conflict has been defused. It then considers the factors that influence human responses in a conflict situation, for example triggers and inhibitors and moves on to ways in which to assess and reduce risks in conflict situations. This training emphasises how communication skills can be used to de-escalate conflict and post-incident issues, such as support and the importance of sharing good practice.

The techniques used by both programmes are suitable for use with children and adults and have been effectively developed in a full range of social care and school settings, including physical and learning disabilities, mental health, involving open, secure and hospital environments. The onus is on the individual school adult to determine the degree of safety intervention appropriate, and when it should be used.

We use individual relational support plans to keep our children safe, which contain information concerning managing a potential crisis which are agreed with all school adults who care for the child as well as the child themselves.

Monitoring and evidence

To evidence that we manage crisis's therapeutically and effectively and use safety interventions in a reasonable and proportional manner, we have in place:

- Safety intervention data and analysis
- Physical intervention reports (PIR) which are completed by the school adults involved immediately after the incident with detailed information which are reviewed daily by a person removed from the staff and incident to be as independent as possible, and or a CPI safety intervention instructor:
 - to assess the validity of the school adults' decision to use safety intervention.
 - to ensure compliance with Libra policy and procedures
 - to identify future strategies to improve de-escalation to minimise the number of incidents requiring safety intervention.

If a review calls for additional staff training this is provided by any of the following or combination of options:

- an immediate refresher safety intervention training course
- a school adults whole team meeting training session
- Supervision with individual school adults

PIRs are:

- Provided to Local Authorities (Social Workers and the 0-25 Team) usually by email within 24 hours for children they have placed with Libra.
- Reviewed half termly alongside academic and other behaviour data to identify patterns of behaviours and potential triggers to enable new strategies / interventions to be identified to reduce the number of issues requiring safety intervention in the future. This informs a training document relating to safety interventions and behaviour management is collated to improve practice and aid communication throughout school adults.
- Reviewed by a tutor with the child using a restorative approach.
- Following the use of a restorative engagement SMT and tutor reflect on:
 - What was the behaviour communicating?
 - How are the unmet needs being addressed?
 - What skills does the child need to develop?
 - What additional learning opportunities are in place to enable this?
 - What suggestions does the child have to support the repairing of the relationship?

There is always learning for school adults and the SMT as well as the child and because of restorative exploration the child's relational support plan may need to be reviewed. This can involve further assessment of need, plans for relational support and intervention to develop skills, and further opportunities to support the repair of relationships.

- Staff training records
- Safeguarding records

- Relational support plans

Staff training and supervision

When managing a crisis, the key question for school adults supporting children presenting with physically aggressive behaviour should be: “What is in the best interests of the child and/or those around them in view of the risks presented?”

The Libra training principles are as follows:

- Safety interventions are a last resort after significant efforts at de-escalation. This means that all other approaches have been exhausted or the incident has occurred so quickly that there was no time for de-escalation techniques to be used.
- We have adopted the CPI Safety intervention programme which acknowledges children’s rights and dignity and provides for school adults safety and protection.
- There is minimum use of force and no deliberate use of pain to affect holds.
- Consideration is given to a child’s sexuality and background in terms of abuse.
- We do not use holds against the joints (wrist/arm locks)
- We avoid Safety interventions where possible, and we have clear strategies to manage when a child drops to the ground when in hold.
- The CPI Safety intervention programme allows school adults to— phase up or down the techniques as circumstances and risk require, supports individual and team approaches to managing challenging behaviour and teaches the importance of verbal de-escalation skills.

Crisis Development Model

Safety intervention is based upon the Crisis Development Model which forms the basis of all training. Throughout this model school adults continue to apply a relational approach to managing the situation.

Crisis Development / Children’s Behaviour Levels	School adults Approaches
Anxiety – a noticeable increase or change in behaviour e.g. pacing, finger drumming, wringing of the hands, staring	Supportive – school adults adopt an empathic, non-judgemental approach attempting to alleviate anxiety of the child using THRIVE techniques and a relational approach. School adults are: • mindful of their faces, voices, and body language • curious and empathic about what is beneath behaviour rather than assuming motives. • appropriately playful and use humour thoughtfully to attune to the child.
Defensive – the beginning stage of loss of rationality. The child becomes belligerent and challenges authority. The child uses verbally abusive language and threatening body language.	Directive – school adults actively manage a potentially escalating situation, providing alternative options and supporting the child to make good choices using THRIVE techniques and a relational approach. School adults are: • mindful of their faces, voices, and body language • curious and empathic about what is beneath behaviour rather than assuming motives. • appropriately playful and use humour thoughtfully to attune to the child.
Risk Behaviour – the child loses control completely which often results in a behaviour that presents a risk to self or others.	Safety intervention Holds – Once a child is dysregulated (mobilisation or immobilisation) their social engagement system has shut down and attempts at social interaction will be met with a defense response. Therefore, at this time school adults ensure that social demand is reduced. School adults remain present and provide the child with attunement and safety cues through their expression, movement, and tone. School adults reduce language demand and ensure that they do not ask questions or give lots of choices. Any directions given are clear and not overly wordy, relying on routine as well as regulating and soothing activities if possible. School adults use CPI Safety intervention holds (agreed and discussed with the child through the child’s relational support plan) to manage risky

	behaviour and minimise harm. School adults make judgements about the level of aggression and risks involved in deciding which Safety interventions to use.
Tension Reduction – the child's physical and emotional energy decreases and is characterised by the regaining of rationality.	Relational approach – school adults adopt a relational approach to maintain or re-establish communication with the child using THRIVE techniques and a relational approach. School adults are: • mindful of their faces, voices, and body language • curious and empathic about what is beneath behaviour rather than assuming motives. • appropriately playful and use humour thoughtfully to attune to the child.

Use of walking and walking escorts

Walking and walking escorts are a useful behaviour strategy when a child:

- is struggling to concentrate and needs a Take 5 break.
- is showing distressed behaviours and who may be refusing to move to a safer more private environment.
- needs support and encouragement to move from their flight and fight responses managed by their reptilian brain into their thinking brains to allow for communication and interaction with staff.
- Is showing distressed behaviour but should avoid using a 1:1 room which can for some children trigger a traumatic reaction and result in escalating behaviour that require safe containment through the use of physical intervention.

For some children walking is the best behaviour strategy to safely manage distressed behaviours that can quickly manifest into issues requiring physical intervention which is to be avoided wherever possible. Initially however, in order to avoid the potential hazards of staff being deliberately tripped up or kicking, staff will walk at a pace slightly faster than an easy walking pace where the child will need to concentrate to keep up and place their feet correctly in order to walk and in doing so will encourage them into engaging their thinking brains. This strategy is underpinned by the therapeutic work of Daniel Kahneman, Dan Siegel, Stephen Porges and Bruce Perry.

The faster pace distracts the child from fighting (this is required because staff are seeking to avoid a situation escalating that might require the use of a physical intervention) as well as requiring the child to think about their foot positioning, the pace of walking and the timing of their steps. This concentration moves them back up from their reptilian brain back up to the rational thinking brain which is when they start to stop trying to punch, kick and trip and staff can then slow the pace and move into more cognitive modalities such as talking, attuning and validating.

Unfortunately, the faster pace of walking may not always be effective in preventing the situation escalating to a situation where the child is physically assaulting the staff. If verbal warnings to stop this behaviour are unsuccessful, this walking escort will move using the crisis development model into a physical intervention to contain unsafe behaviours that pose a threat to the safety of staff.

CPI Safety intervention holds

Holding refers to a range of safety intervention skills which enable school adults to maintain a degree of physical restriction to minimise the potential harm to self or others associated with a child's physically aggressive or risky behaviour. The safety interventions which staff are trained to use range from low levels of restriction through to medium and high levels of restriction so that each level of restriction can be applied to a full range of children's behaviours and across a range of situations as determined by an organic on the spot risk assessment and in line with the child's relational support plan which is agreed with each child.

Libra staff do not use safety interventions which are designed to take a child down to the floor. Children, however, can frequently and deliberately drop to the floor when in a standing hold, and this is managed by putting the child into a seated position on the floor to retain dignity with staff also seated. If school adults are unable to safely support a child in a seated position, they will release the hold to allow the child to either remain safely on the floor on their own or stand up. If the child's physically aggressive behaviour continues, the school adults will further support with a standing hold. Please see the supporting document, Staff CPI safety intervention holds, for a full and clear visual description of every hold that staff are trained to use.

Safety intervention Decision – Making Matrix

School adults are trained to undertake an organic on the spot risk assessment regarding physical risk behaviour to support their critical decision making during a crisis event. Developing critical decision making enables school adults to remain in control of their own emotions and behaviour to make appropriate judgements about the necessary action required. School adults are trained to determine the necessary safety interventions and the level of restriction that may be appropriate to keep people safe making decisions objectively rather than subjectively using the decision-making matrix which is a tool which school adults use to reach objective critical decisions about risk:

Risk: The chance that an event or behaviour may occur. Everyday life involves some degree of risk which can be viewed along a continuum from lower risk to higher risk. When reaching a decision about risk, it is important that we objectively consider two key variables.

- **Likelihood:** The chance an event or behaviour may occur. This is viewed along a continuum from unlikely to likely.
- **Outcome:** The severity of harm if the event or behaviour does occur. Outcome can be viewed along a continuum from low severity to high severity.

CPI safety intervention staff training

All school adults receive a comprehensive safety intervention two-day training course during their induction training which concentrates on:

- A theoretical understanding of why and how critical incidents occur and how best they are managed.
- De-escalation and positive re-enforcement techniques as a learning tool for children
- Safety intervention holds.

CPI Safety Intervention training thereafter is annual through refresher training.

What is Reasonable Force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most school adults at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with children.
- Force is usually used either to control or to restrict movement. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm in an escort through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a child needs to be held to prevent violence or injury to themselves or others.
- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control children and to restrict movement. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between children or blocking a child's path, or active physical contact such as leading a child by the arm out of a classroom.
- Safety intervention means to hold back physically or to bring a child under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when a child is physically assaulting a school adult and is refusing to stop when asked.
- School adults will always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the child. Whenever force is required, even reasonable force to contain a child's behaviour, there is a high risk of the child, or the staff being marked or bruised.

Who can use reasonable force?

- All school adults have the legal power to use reasonable force. (Section 93, Education, and Inspections Act 2006)
- This power applies to all school adults at the school. It can also apply to people whom the principal has temporarily put in charge of children such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

When can reasonable force be used?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent children from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In school, force can be used for two main purposes – to control children or to restrict movement.

- The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgment of the school adult concerned done using the decision matrix and should always depend on the individual circumstances. At any time, the key question for everyone involved with children at Libra whose behaviour challenges should be: "What is in the best interests of the child and/or those around them in view of the risks presented?"
- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

The Libra School can use reasonable force to:

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow multiple requests to do so.
- prevent a child from behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit.
- prevent a child leaving the classroom where allowing the child to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour or learning of others;
- prevent a child from attacking a member of school adults or another child, or to stop a fight.
- hold a child at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.
- contain a child if there is concern that their behaviour might result in an injury to themselves.
- prevent a child from deliberately (criminally) damaging school property or the fabric of the buildings.
- move a child when they are unable to follow instructions or make a decision which impacts the learning or safety of other children

This list is not exhaustive.

The Libra School acknowledge their legal and moral duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN). Considerable time and planning with children and school adults produces detailed relational support plans. However, the sometimes irrational and unpredictable behaviour of these children can present significant risks to themselves and others that may require safe containment.

We understand that:

- The government has rejected calls to ban physical punishment of children in England as they maintain children are already protected in law.
- in Wales, Scotland and Jersey, any type of corporal punishment, including smacking, hitting, slapping, and shaking is illegal.
- the Children Act 2004 says it is unlawful to assault a child causing actual or grievous bodily harm, or with child cruelty.
- in England and Northern Ireland, it is legal for a parent or carer to discipline their child physically if it is a 'reasonable punishment'.
- in England it is illegal to hit an adult, but equal protection is not given to a child.

We believe physically disciplining a child is not acceptable.

We believe we:

- are responsible for managing children's behaviour in an appropriate way.
- must not give or threaten corporal punishment to a child and must not use or threaten any punishment which could adversely affect a child's wellbeing.
- must take all reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not given by any person who cares for or is in regular contact with a child, or by any person living or working in the premises where care is provided.

Power to search children without consent

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, the principal and authorised school adults can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, and stolen items. Separate guidance is available on the power to search without consent.

Complaints

The nature of safety intervention can result in a child experiencing negative feelings often because of a perceived loss of control. We use a restorative approach after an incident to try to achieve:

- Effective communication.

- Repaired relationships.
- Empathy and understanding for the other's perspective.
- Respect.
- Understanding the impact of one's own behaviour on others or themselves.
- Reparation for material loss or damage.

We strive also to restore within individual children – for example:

- A sense of security.
- Self-confidence.
- Self-respect.
- Dignity.

Overall, we aim for the process to result in the restoration of a child's sense of belonging to our school community. If these negative feelings manifest themselves in an informal or formal complaint about the use of force it will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated in line with the Libra Complaints policy. We understand that safety intervention of a nature which causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under child protection or disciplinary procedures in which case the complaint will be managed in line with the Libra safeguarding policy or disciplinary policy and procedures respectively.

Where a member of school adults has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder – this will provide a defense to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. When a complaint is made, the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of school adults to show that he/she has acted reasonably.

Suspension will not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force. In this instance, the school will refer to the Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other School Staff policy where an allegation of using excessive force is made against a school staff member. This policy makes it clear that a person must not be suspended automatically, or without careful thought.

Safe Physical Contact within the Libra School

It is not illegal to touch a child. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a child is proper and necessary. For some children placed with LIBRA who may have learning, physical or sensory disabilities, physical contact might be the primary means of communication.

- Communication through touch (a form of physical contact that expresses feelings or emotion). Often, touch is used to show that you care or to help someone by directing them. Touch sends different messages depending on the context.
- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school.
- When comforting a distressed child.
- When a child is congratulated or praised.
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- To give first aid.
- To support self-care.
- This list is not exhaustive.

School adults are aware that some children admitted to the Libra School have experienced sexual and physical abuse and therefore school adults ensure that any physical contact is not misinterpreted.

The following is observed in this regard:

- The EHCP and risk assessment will indicate background and awareness of other professionals of any issues that would make physical contact with the child inappropriate, or uncomfortable for him/her.
- Physical contact should never be in response to or intended to arouse sexual expectations of feelings.
- Age and gender are appropriate considerations in deciding proper physical contact.

- Where a member of school adults feels that it would be inappropriate to respond to a child seeking physical comfort, the reasons for denying this should be explained to the child. The child should be comforted verbally, as necessary.

There should be no general expectations of privacy for the physical expression of affection or comfort, although this may be appropriate in some circumstances (e.g. bereavement).

Responsibilities

The senior management team will:

- work in conjunction with the Directors to ensure all school staff, children and parents are aware of and comply with this policy.
- provide an environment that is safe, fun, stimulating and challenging to all children.
- promote an awareness of and respect for a diversity of cultures, values, beliefs and abilities.
- encourage parents to take an active role in policy development where appropriate.
- ensure all relevant risk assessments are in place to ensure a safe school environment.
- provide leadership and vision in respect of equality.
- provide guidance, support and training to all staff.

Teaching and learning support staff will:

- comply with all aspects of this policy.
- implement the school's equalities policy and schemes.
- report and deal with all incidents of discrimination.
- attend appropriate training sessions.
- report any concerns they have about any aspect of the school community.
- receive relevant training, periodically and ongoing as required, according to their role.
- have equal chances of training, career development and promotion.
- receive equal opportunities training on induction to improve their understanding of the Equality Act 2010 and its implications.

Children will:

- be aware of and contribute to all appropriate policies through the school council.
- work with and support the school council on all agenda items.

Parents and Carers will be encouraged to:

- be aware of and comply with all school policies including this one.
- be encouraged to become involved in policy development by taking part in parent engagement opportunities and by maximising learning opportunities between home and school support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure smooth running of the school.

Linked Policies and documents:

Safeguarding / Whistleblowing / Health and Safety / Allegations Against Staff / Complaints / Relational / Staff Safety Intervention and De-escalation Handbook.

Policy Location

This policy can be found:

- on SharePoint within the staff and master's folder
- on the school website www.libraschool.co.uk
- available upon request from the office: admin@libraschool.co.uk / 01598 740044

Lead Assessor: Kirsty Crosby



Date: 10.12.25

