



Addendum to LA Behaviour and Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy June 2020

De-escalation and the Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in the light of COVID 19

De-escalation with social distancing in mind

With the current level of heightened anxiety in some children (perhaps caused by changes in routine and environment), some may find it harder than usual to feel safe and secure at school. This may result in some challenging situations.

It should also be noted that some staff may be experiencing heightened levels of anxiety which could present as lower levels of tolerance, managers should take this into consideration when considering support for children who may present with challenging behaviour.

The techniques of de-escalation are particularly needed in the current climate to maintain social distancing guidance wherever possible. With this in mind, below are some techniques which will hopefully be useful in both prevention and managing a child who is displaying challenging behaviour.

1. Prevention (consistency)

There may be lots of different adults working with a child who is sensitive to transitions in comparison to the usual number. Consistency during this period is a challenge. Staff need to present a consistent approach with the best way to support individuals with additional needs.

Ensure all staff working with the child are familiar with individual antecedents and procedures. They should be documented and shared through amendments to risk assessments and Positive Handling Plans. For pupils who have a risk assessment and Positive Handling plan, all necessary safety adjustments should be made as identified in the modified plans, with particular reference to known antecedents.

2. More prevention (curriculum)

Targeted activities such as circle time, ELSA and PSE sessions may also help support the pupil. These activities will promote the individual child's pro-social skills and whole group empathy for the child with the difficulty. Hopefully this will also go some way towards prevention of other children engaging in provocation.

3. Even more prevention (signs)

Look out for signs that a child may be becoming unsettled and direct them to a safe space where they can take some time to return to a calm state. Signs could include balled fists, agitation, pacing, shouting etc. Check and add to the child's profile for a list that is personal to them.

4. Diversion and Re-direction

When the challenging behaviours of a pupil are beginning to escalate, it is essential that staff use strategies such as diversion and re-direction to reduce risk. Movement and physical activity can help de-stress individuals. Sometimes some fresh air and a run around will help to calm an agitated child. Timetable physical brain breaks throughout the day.

5. Calm voice and stance

If a child is in an agitated state and behaviour begins to escalate, recognise that your body language and how you say something will communicate more to the child than what is actually being said. In view of this, keep sentences simple and brief.

6. Wait until calm

If a child is in an agitated state wait until they have calmed down before talking over any issues. You won't be able to discuss any contributing factors until the child is calm.

7. Wording

Use words and phrases that de-escalate and give the child the opportunity to follow your instruction. Phrases include:

- Let's try...
- It seems like...
- Maybe we can...
- I wonder if...

8. Distraction

If you can distract agitated pupils, then they may be able to calm down enough to have a dialogue with you. Topics of interest should be identified in a Positive Handling Plan and can be used as a distraction strategy if a child begins to present with challenging behaviour.

9. Use humour

This is dependent on the individual child but can work well and fast when de-escalation is needed. Remember to avoid sarcasm!

10. Remove the other children

In the interest of making situations safe, it is sometimes preferable to remove the rest of the class rather than the child. Although logistically challenging, it is easier to

maintain social distancing this way. You may need to prepare another area in advance for the class to go. Ensure you are in an area where the child is not backed into a corner.

11. Get more support – (change of face)

Do you have a person who is on call to support with de-escalation? It is essential that this second person presents an outwardly calm demeanour. Change of face is effective when behaviours become targeted to the individual who may have indirectly caused the upset.

12. Involve parents

It is good practice to have regular communication with parents with home school communication methods (e.g. seesaw, class-charts) noting positives about the day. This will help home and school work together, especially with the increased number of adults.

Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI)

The school must utilize all strategies available to minimise risk to themselves and other pupils, recognising that making situations safe is paramount. Staff need to use strategies such as known motivators, brain break activities, rewards, use of outdoor space and quiet safe spaces which should be identified in the Positive Handling Plan. Staff should consider carefully the level of challenge in activities where skills may have regressed or been lost to ensure these do not become a trigger.

Members of staff have a professional duty of care for pupils. RPI may be required in extreme cases to ensure the safety of adults and pupils after all other strategies, as outlined above, have failed to make situations safe.

All staff need to consider the risks at all times before using RPI and be mindful that the current pandemic situation increases the risk for people who do not adhere to the current social distancing guidelines.

If all of the above de-escalation strategies have proved ineffective, the use of RPI may need to be considered if a child is a danger to themselves, their behaviour is deemed dangerous to other people and the child is causing criminal damage. Staff need to consider whether using RPI will make the situation safer as they would need to encroach on the current distancing guidelines to effectively use RPI.

Procedures to minimise risk during RPI

- Always approach the child from the side therefore minimising face to face contact.
- Recognise that certain procedures to move children safely require the adult to be behind the child, thus negating the risk of spitting.

If RPI has been used, it is important that the following measures are considered:

- Wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap or use of hand sanitiser
- For certain pupils due to the levels of risk identified in the risk Assessment, staff may require Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). *Please see Section 14: Final Guidance for Safe Re-opening of Schools for further information regarding the use of PPE.*

At the current time the LA has not received any updated information from Team Teach in relation to updating training and accreditation. As soon as information becomes available this will be shared with schools.