



**HEATON SCHOOL**

# **BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

**DATE: APRIL 2026**

**REVIEW: MAY 2027**

**WRITTEN BY:**

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**Amanda Wright (Head of Student Support)**

**Date agreed by Governors: 14/5/2026**

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Ruddick', is positioned above the 'Signed:' label.

## 1. Vision and Principles

At Heaton School, we believe that every student has a right to be heard and understood. For many of our pupils, their communication skills are developing. Consequently, we recognise that all behaviour is a form of communication. Our primary goal is not to suppress behaviours of concern, but to understand the underlying message, meet the student's needs and provide them with more effective tools to express themselves.

To ensure a consistent, empathetic, and safe environment, our approach is guided by the following principles:

- **Curiosity** – we meet behaviour of concern with curiosity – why is this happening – rather than judgement or punishment
- **Building relationships** - We recognise at Heaton School that positive, consistent relationships between staff and students are the primary tool for change.
- **Understanding the function of the behaviour** – We continually attempt to identify the function of behaviour in order to establish effective support strategies.
- **Promote independence** – We encourage students to take ownership for their behaviour. We are aiming for students to learn strategies that will equip them for adult life.
- **Equity over Equality:** Rewards and consequences are individualised based on a student's cognitive profile and sensory needs.
- **Safety and Dignity:** Every interaction must preserve the dignity of the young person, even during moments of high-level crisis.
- **Safety and Regulation** – A young person cannot learn if they don't feel safe. We prioritise **co-regulation** – using our own calm presence to support our students to regulate before any attempt is made to 'teach'.
- **Creating supporting environments** – We provide adapted environments and support total communication to bridge the gap between a student's intent and their expression.

At Heaton School our goal is to support students in developing self-regulation, emotional resilience, and functional communication skills. We commit to moving away from 'behaviour management' and towards 'wellbeing support'. This means:

- **Reducing Triggers** – Proactively modifying the environment to prevent distress
- **Skill Building** – Explicitly teaching 'functional communication' so students can request help, breaks or objects/items without displaying behaviours of concern.
- **Positive Relationships** – Building strong, trusting connections so students feel safe
- **Unconditional Positive Regard** – A student's value is never tied to their behaviour. Every day is a fresh start and every interaction is an opportunity to rebuild trust.

## 2. Understanding Behaviour as Communication

At Heaton School we are committed to providing a calm, safe and supportive environment. For our pupils with PMLD, SLD, ASC and complex needs, we recognise that behaviours of concern are often a form of communication, or a response to sensory overload, anxiety, or unmet needs. For students with complex needs, behaviours of concern are often a response to internal or external factors. We categorise these triggers into four main areas:

- **Sensory:** Overstimulation (noise, light) or under-stimulation (seeking input).
- **Communication:** Frustration due to an inability to express a want, need, or feeling.
- **Medical/Physical:** Pain, hunger, lack of sleep, or seizure activity.
- **Emotional:** Anxiety, trauma triggers, or a lack of felt safety.

At Heaton school the pathway model / curriculum allows students to access appropriate learning and support as is required dependent upon need.

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## 3. The Proactive Environment

To minimise dysregulation, the school environment must be "low arousal" and highly predictable.

Feature	Implementation
Communication	Use of PECS, Makaton, visual timelines, communication books, "Now/Next" boards, symbols, Objects of Reference, AAC device, Intensive interaction, vocal communication (where applicable), use of gestural language
Environment	At Heaton school we promote a total communication environment. Where applicable students have access to sensory breakout spaces, outdoor spaces, regulation opportunities (for example, outdoor gym/ trampoline, swing). To avoid over stimulation, we encourage sensory aware spaces which is clutter free in presentation.
Transitions	Use of visual timers, sand timers, and verbal/visual "countdowns", Objects of reference, photographs, sharing of school routines with families.
Curriculum	At Heaton school our pathway curriculum is adapted to the sensory, emotional and cognitive profile of each individual student:

Feature	Implementation
	<p><b>Preformal:</b> Our Pre-Formal pathway is for students who have profound and complex communication and interaction needs. It is designed to meet the individual educational, health and care needs of pupils through a highly personalised approach. It focuses on engagement and the early communication, social, emotional and cognitive skills that are the foundation of learning.</p> <p><b>Informal:</b> Informal pupils are ‘learning to be’, with the informal curriculum designed for our students with complex learning difficulties who are working at the most complex end of the SLD spectrum. It is designed to meet the individual educational, health and care needs of students through a highly individualised approach focusing on interest led learning, exploration and play.</p> <p><b>Semiformal:</b> Semi-formal students ‘do to learn’ with our semi-formal curriculum designed for our students with severe learning difficulties working at higher pre-key stage levels and towards some national curriculum expectations. Students following our semi-formal curriculum learn best when experiencing relatable learning experiences – this could be through play, functional activities or through a topic-based approach.</p>

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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Staff Responsibilities

#### Holistic Care

- Staff are expected to value each child individually. High standards of professional care must be maintained at all times, regardless of their behaviour or support needs.
- Staff must always act in the pupil’s best interests as part of their duty of care. This includes ensuring all pupils are treated fairly, respectfully, and with professional empathy.
- Staff are responsible for enabling pupils to recognise and navigate a range of emotions. This involves proactively supporting the development of a pupil’s emotional regulation and self-awareness.

#### Communication and Professionalism

- Staff must respond to all pupils in a calm, positive, and composed manner.
- Staff are required to consciously manage their own communication, ensuring that voice, tone, body language, and facial expressions contribute to a de-escalated and safe environment.
- Staff are required to act as positive role models, ensuring their personal conduct consistently reflects the school's high standards and commitment to best practice.

- All staff communication should be directive and proactive. The focus should be on outlining the desired behaviour and positive outcomes to help guide the pupil's choices.

### **Safety, Reporting, and Accountability**

- It is the responsibility of staff to notify the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of any serious incident and to strictly adhere to school recording procedures regarding accidents and behavioural incidents.
- Staff must be prepared to provide immediate assistance to colleagues when managing behaviours of concern to ensure the safety of both the pupil and the staff team.
- Staff have a professional obligation to report concerns regarding practice to the Headteacher or, where appropriate, the Governing Body, in accordance with the school's **Whistle-blowing Policy**.

### **Collaborative Partnerships**

- Staff will work with teams and families to ensure a consistent, joined-up approach for every pupil, regardless of the setting.
- Teachers are responsible for maintaining close communication with parents and carers, ensuring they are fully informed and involved in the strategies used to support their child's behavioural development.

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS**

Parents and carers should keep the school informed about any concerns, problems and family circumstances that may have an impact on their child's wellbeing and behaviour. We develop Individual Support Plans (ISPs) in direct partnership with parents and carers. All plans require mutual agreement and include a specific review date; however, we encourage parents/carers to contact us regarding any necessary changes in the interim.

### **4. Graduated Response Framework**

#### **Stage 1: Universal Support (Proactive)**

All students have a **One-Page Profile/ student passport**. This includes their likes, dislikes, and known triggers. Where applicable some students have an ISP (individual support plan) that clearly outlines a student's specific support needs, especially around their behaviour.

It is an expectation that all documents are shared with staff and that the content of the plans are known to ensure that strategies are deployed on a daily basis.

All students are supported consistently at Heaton school with using predictable structure, routines, visual supports, structured environments, differentiated learning and sensory regulation opportunities.

At Heaton School we adopt the zones of regulation model to teach students about their emotions and how to respond appropriately. Staff receive annual training on this to ensure that standards are maintained in its use.

#### **Stage 2: Targeted De-escalation (Active)**

When signs of dysregulation appear, staff use a variety of strategies. These are guided by the knowledge of individual support needs as identified in ISPs.

- **Verbal Redirection:** Using "positive framing" (e.g., "Feet on the floor" instead of "Don't kick").
- **Change of Face/Space:** Swapping the adult lead or moving to a quieter area.
- **Sensory Breaks:** Access to heavy work, fidgets, or weighted blankets as per their OT profile.
- **Offer choices:** offer a break, alternative activity

### **Stage 3: Crisis Management**

#### **The Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention.**

Here at Heaton School, we recognise that any physical intervention/support can have a profound impact on an individual, especially when they are experiencing a heightened state of arousal or when there is a restrictive element.

A Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) will **only** be used when there is a clear and immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, when all other less restrictive interventions have been exhausted, leaving a restrictive physical intervention as a **last resort**.

When the use of restrictive physical intervention is deemed necessary, the school adheres to a graded and gradual response framework. This approach ensures that any intervention remains proportionate to the situation and follows the principle of minimal necessity.

#### **Core Principles of Intervention:**

- **Least Restrictive Option:** Staff will always prioritise the least restrictive intervention possible to ensure safety.
- **Minimum Duration:** Interventions will be maintained only for the shortest period required to resolve the immediate risk.
- **Dynamic De-escalation:** The level of intervention will be systematically reduced at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Policy Note:** All physical interventions must be conducted in accordance with statutory guidance and used only as a last resort when non-physical de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

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## **5. Recording and Reporting**

At Heaton School, we recognise that robust recording and reporting are essential for ensuring the safety of our students, maintaining transparency with families, and identifying patterns that allow us to refine our support strategies. For students with SLD, PMLD, ASC, and complex needs, data is our most effective tool for understanding communication through behaviour.

### **Same-Day Digital Recording (IRIS Adapt)**

Every significant incident involving behaviours of concern or physical intervention must be recorded on IRIS Adapt as soon as practicable following a behavioural event. Staff member(s) who were

involved in the incident are responsible for completing an incident report. These will always be completed no later than the same day to ensure accuracy of accounts.

### **Parent and Carer Notification**

Open communication is vital for maintaining the trust of our families and ensuring consistency between home and school. Parents/carers will be notified via ClassDojo, telephone or in-person on the same day that a behavioural incident occurs.

For incidents involving Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI), parents/carers will be notified in writing via email or ClassDojo, even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed with parents/carers as part of a pupil's individual support plan.

### **Essential Data Requirements**

When completing IRIS Adapt reports, staff will record the following details:

- **Name of Pupil and Staff involved**
  - **Time, Date and Location**
  - **Potential Triggers** – specific environmental, sensory or social factors
  - **Any de-escalation strategies used** – what strategies from the pupil's Individual Support Plan (ISP) were tried
  - **Physical Intervention** – the type of technique, the degree of force used – **must be proportionate**
  - **Duration** – The exact start and end time of a restrictive intervention
  - **Any Injuries Sustained** – detailed accounts of any injuries to pupil or staff
  - **Post-Incident Support** – Debriefs, medical checks, relationship reparation etc.
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## **6. Restorative Practice and Post-Crisis**

We view every incident as a learning opportunity. The debrief process is split into two focuses: **Reparation and Reflection.**

### **For the Pupil:**

- **Follow-up Conversation:** Where appropriate (dependent on communication stage), use visuals, social stories or AAC to discuss the event.
- **Relationship Reparation:** Focus on re-establishing a secure base. Ensure the student knows the relationship with staff remains positive and safe.
- **Understanding the "Why":** Use the incident to analyse if the behaviour was a result of unmet sensory needs, pain, or a breakdown in communication.

### **For the Staff:**

- **Well-being Support:** A mandatory check-in with a member of the Senior Leadership team or the Head of Student Support to process the emotional impact of the incident.

- **Plan Review:** If an incident is new or there has been a change to frequency/intensity, the student's Individual Support Plan (ISP) must be reviewed. Was the plan followed? Does it need updating to reflect new triggers or more effective de-escalation?

**Note:** For many of our students, the debrief process focuses heavily on physiological observation and sensory regulation, as traditional conversations may not be accessible.

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## 7. Parent and Multi-Agency Collaboration

We recognize that behaviour does not happen in a vacuum. The school works closely with:

- **Families:** To ensure consistency between home and school.
- **Occupational Therapy (OT):** To manage sensory processing needs.
- **Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT):** To provide the tools for functional communication.

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**Note:** This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding Policy, Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy, and the SEND Code of Practice.

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## 8. Restrictive Practice Guidance

This school adheres to the *Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) Regulations 2025*. We are committed to the principle that restrictive interventions are a failure of the environment or support strategy, not the student.

### A. New Statutory Definitions

The 2026 guidance provides clear, legal definitions that our staff must follow:

- **Restrictive Intervention:** Any method of responding to a student that restricts their liberty or movement (physical, mechanical, or environmental).
- **Seclusion:** Forcibly confining a student alone in a room or space they are prevented from leaving.
  - *Note:* Seclusion is now defined as a **non-disciplinary safety measure**. It must **never** be used as a punishment or "time-out" for non-compliance.
- **Non-Force Restraint:** New for 2026, this includes removing a student's walking aid or wheelchair to prevent movement. This is now legally considered a restraint and must be recorded.

### B. Mandatory Recording and Reporting (Statutory Duty)

From April 2026, it is a legal requirement to record and report every "significant incident." In this school, we define this as:

1. Any use of **reasonable force**.

2. Any incident of **seclusion**.
3. Any incident of **non-force restraint**.

#### The "Same Day" Rule:

- **Written Record:** A formal record must be completed by the staff involved **on the same day** as the incident. This will be on IRIS ADAPT.
- **Parental Notification:** Parents/carers must be informed in writing **the same day** an intervention occurs. This is a statutory duty, regardless of whether the intervention is part of a pre-agreed Individual Support Plan.

#### C. Prohibited Practices

In line with the 2026 updates, the following are strictly prohibited and will be treated as a safeguarding matter:

- Any hold that restricts **airway, breathing, or circulation** (e.g., pressure on the neck, chest, or abdomen).
- Any "floor holds" or pinning a student to the ground.
- Using force or seclusion as a threat or punishment.

#### D. Governance and Data Oversight

The Governing Body will now review **Restrictive Practice Data** every term. This oversight aims to:

- Identify if specific groups (e.g., non-verbal students) are experiencing higher rates of intervention.
- Ensure that "Safe Spaces" or "Calm Rooms" are not inadvertently being used for unlawful seclusion.
- Trigger a review of a student's Individual Support Plan (ISP) if they experience more than three restrictive interventions in a half-term.

#### Training

All staff at Heaton School receive training delivered by Team Teach, which is a widely used framework in educational settings that aligns with the Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) standards. The training focuses on using strategies that foster relationships, create positive environments, lower risk and minimise the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI). Furthermore, it teaches that practice should only ever involve restrictive intervention as a last resort to maintain safety.

All staff at Heaton School initially undertake a 12-hour Level 2 Team Teach training course delivered by highly skilled and qualified tutors. All staff then attend a 6-hour training re-accreditation every year.

## **Impact**

At Heaton School, we can often be faced with significant challenges around supporting positive behaviour owing to the complex nature of the needs of many of our students and other additional factors.

The impact of this policy on pupil outcomes will be measured by an individual pupil basis. Sometimes, the journey will be longer for some than others. Progress will be measured in a range of ways:

- Reduction in incidents – frequency, severity, duration
- Increased engagement
- Demonstrating new skills
- Reduced anxiety
- Improved tolerance
- Development of coping skills

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## **Appendices**

- Appendix A – Individual Support Plan
- Appendix B - Staff easy-read guide
- Appendix C – Parent team teach guide

**APPENDIX A**

**Name:**

**Date of plan:**

**Triggers:**

**General Comments on Timing/Settings:**

**General strategies:**

**Best strategy to minimise negative behaviours:**

**Previous unsuccessful methods of management:**

**Additional Information:**

How often?	
◎◎◎◎	Frequently
◎◎◎	Daily
◎◎	1+ per week
◎	Rarely

	Behaviour
Broad Goals	
Short term decrease	
Short term increase	

Behaviour/ Zone	Setting(s) / Times	How often?	Response	Behaviour Labelling/Language	Record ?


**General strategies to reduce the risk of incidents:**

**Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) necessary?**

**Any contra-indications to using RPI?**

**Specific RPI techniques used, when used and when reviewed:**

**Staff authorised to use RPI:**

**Parental / Carer's views (dated):**

**Review dates:**

**Method of recording** – IRIS Adapt to record all incidents.

Major incidents reported to Headteacher and formally recorded using Local Authority Systems.

The use of RPI must be recorded on IRIS Adapt to monitor management and progress.

Use of a Safe Space must be recorded on IRIS Adapt.

STAR Analysis Chart to be completed for serious and/or re-occurring incidents. Used to identify patterns e.g. settings/time, triggers, students targeted.

## APPENDIX B

### Staff Guide: Restrictive Interventions in Schools Guidance April 2026



**Our Goal:** To provide a safe, trauma-informed environment where restrictive intervention is the **absolute last resort**.

#### 1. The Golden Rule

Physical intervention must only be used when **strictly necessary** to prevent:

- **Injury** to the pupil.
- **Injury** to others.
- **Serious damage** to property.
- **Serious disorder**
- Committing a **Criminal Offence**

#### 2. The Legal Test

Ask yourself:

- **Is it Necessary?** Is there any other way to keep everyone safe?
- **Is it Proportionate?** Am I using the minimum force for the shortest time?
- **Is it in the Pupil's Best Interest?** Considering their SEND and trauma history, is this the safest option for *them*?

#### 3. Prohibited Practices - The NEVER List

Under the 2026 guidance, the following are strictly forbidden:

- **Pain-Based Compliance:** Using pain to force a pupil to move or obey.
- **Respiratory Restriction:** Any hold that puts pressure on the neck, chest, back, or abdomen (e.g., prone/face-down restraint).
- **Seclusion as Punishment:** Confining a pupil alone in a room as a disciplinary measure. Seclusion is a safety emergency measure only.

#### 4. Mandatory Reporting - The Same-Day Rule

The 2026 guidance introduces strict timelines. If a restrictive intervention occurs:

- **Record it:** Fill out the RPI form on IRIS Adapt form before you leave school today.
- **Report it:** Notify Head of Student Support immediately.
- **Parental Link:** Parents **must** be notified the **same day**.

## 5. Post-Incident - Repair and Rebuild

We do not just "move on. We follow a **Learning Cycle**:

- **Pupil Wellbeing:** Ensure the pupil feels safe and cared for once they are regulated.
- **Staff Debrief:** Staff will attend a debrief with Head of Student Support
- **Data Entry:** All incidents are logged for review to help us reduce future restraint.

### **Remember: All Behaviour is Communication**

If we are using restrictive practice, it means the pupil's needs aren't being met or their environment is overwhelming.

Use **Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)** de-escalation strategies first. Some examples are listed below:

- *Distraction*
- *Redirection*
- *Sensory Regulation*
- *Increase Processing Time*
- *Reduce Verbal Input*
- *Giving Space*
- *Change of Face/Staff Swap*
- *Environmental Changes – lights, noise, audience, inside/outside*

**Staff Responsibility:** It is every staff member's duty to actively seek ways to reduce the need for restrictive interventions through environmental changes and relationship building.

## APPENDIX C



Team Teach Leaflet  
CYP.pdf

