# Policy for

## The Use of Calm Spaces

### Cambian Spring Hill School

| Policy Author / Reviewer | Samantha Campbell |
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| Staff Groups Affected | All Staff |

## Contents

*"Together, Everyone Achieves More"*

## 1. Monitoring & Review

The Policy Author will undertake a formal review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later one year from the date of approval shown above, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

Samantha Campbell

Principal

July 2021

## 2. Summary

The children and young people who attend Spring Hill School have a range of learning intellectual and developmental difficulties, which can affect their behaviour. Antecedents are initially identified in EHCP's, and Behaviour Support Plans compiled, and regularly reviewed further to MDT meetings, to provide strategies. Reasons behind escalating behaviour is varied but is typically linked to frustration, anxiety or misreading situations. Some learners can present with significant and specific behaviour problems; they do not always respond in a predictable way and therefore professionals work as a collective to support the individual to identify the triggers and use strategies to self-manage. Many students self-regulate following intervention via the Zones of Regulation however, there are occasions where the need for an immediate alternative is required.

At Spring Hill School, calm rooms and low arousal/ 'safe' spaces are available for all learners to access on a voluntary basis and as part of planned time-led intervention(s) when behaviour presents as an immediate and significant risk to the individual student and/or other learners and staff. These spaces have been designed to maintain the individual's dignity and provide a non-threatening environment to support learners who may feel completely over-whelmed and emotionally dysregulated or who may require rapid support and intervention to ensure that their welfare, and that of others in the immediate vicinity, is not compromised. Students are at liberty to make use of safe spaces as a means of managing their own behaviour, by requesting time or self-referring, when they recognise their stress levels are rising. Supporting our students to 'time-out', as required, effectively reduces the incidence of crisis situations and supports our restraint reduction ethos. This means that relationships with staff members are not damaged by the use of more restrictive practices.

Calm spaces offer children and young people, at Spring Hill, an environment that is low in sensory stimulation (e.g. people, sounds, light, noise, movement) and provide a safe

setting to support them appropriately, and according to their agreed plan, so that they are able to re-engage with their programme of learning.

Staff and children and young people have the right to feel safe and secure at this school. The best interests of the child will override and inform any actions undertaken by staff to modify inappropriate or unsafe behaviour.  Actions must be proportionate, reasonable and necessary.

This policy relates to the use of a room to allow a student to calm as safely and effectively as possible so that they can re-engage in the learning process.  Please note:

- Under **no** circumstances should calm spaces be used as punitive measure.  At no time should students be left unsupervised whilst making use of a calm space

- It may be appropriate to allow the student to calm on their own but staff must be able to see the student via a window

- At no time should students be locked in calm space

- If a student tries to leave the space before they are calm, staff should use low and slow responses as per their MAPA training in order to direct the student to stay

- In extreme cases when the student is highly distressed and unable to process requests, staff may need to implement a dynamic risk assessment (please also refer to the school's Positive Handling Policy).  This response must be recorded after the event in line with school policy via CPOMS or Behaviour Watch

- Staff will not support the restriction of a pupil's right to freely leave a calm room, unless there is an immediate danger of harm to the other students or others; such restriction will be treated as a physical restraint by the member(s) of staff involved and recorded as such using the school's policy and procedures

## 3.  Definitions

- **Calm Room** - a room that offers a student an opportunity to calm during the school day

- **Low Arousal Area/'Safe' Space** - a modified area identified within a school that offers a low sensory working environment **(please refer to Guidance on the use of Low Arousal Areas)**

Since calm rooms at Spring Hill School are occasionally used to support learners to regulate extremes of behaviour, it is important to make a clear distinction between the use of these and 'safe' spaces/low arousal areas to ensure consistency in what they are called and how they are used.  Separate policy guidance in respect of the use of calm rooms and low arousal areas/'safe' spaces has been developed in order to address misperception over the appropriate use of these two very different resources.

In this policy it is anticipated that staff members are competent in consistently communicating using therapeutically informed language and in line with the approved individual's communication strategies at Spring Hill School.  Staff receive robust induction,

CPD and have access to all IRA's, BSP's and Rapid Response Plans, all of which are reviewed regularly.

## 4. Best Practice for the Use of Calm Rooms – Self Referral

For a variety of reasons, there are times when learners who attend Spring Hill School need access to a quiet and calm space. Our calm rooms are sensory-controlled, comforting and peaceful areas. The rationale behind the use of the calm rooms is carefully planned explicit intervention, **not** exclusion or punishment as it is a space to help children and young people to safely manage their feelings and emotions in a more dignified and less public manner. Learners can self-refer to these spaces for an appropriate period of time if they feel that they are not managing and need time away from the classroom however during this period:

- the student will remain the responsibility and in the care of at least one member of staff

- the staff member will ensure that the student is absent from lessons for no longer than is necessary

- time spent away from the classroom is used as constructively as possible to unpick what is causing anxiety and leading to a lack of engagement in learning

- further to supporting the student, the supervising staff member must ensure that relevant information is recorded in a timely fashion using appropriate systems e.g. Behaviour Watch, Cause for Concern, and that Individual Behaviour Support (BSP's) Plans and/or Individual Risk Assessments (IRA's) are reviewed and amended accordingly

- If deemed appropriate by a member of SLT, the form teacher will contact parents/carers to appraise them of events and discuss future intervention/support

## 5. Helping Students to Understand how to use the Calm Room

During occasions of self-referral or instances which require minimal staff intervention, the calm room can be used as an intervention to:

- help the individual to manage their own emotional state and therefore develop resilience and accountability for their own behaviour and decision-making

- reduce the risk to staff/other students and/or reduce the regularity of disruptive behaviour from the body of the school

- reduce the need for prolonged use of physical intervention

The following approach should be adopted for all learners during their induction with further reminders as appropriate period:

- Introduce the calm room in a positive and proactive way that helps the child/young person to understand the benefits that can come from its' usage. Explain that the

calm room is not a teaching room as it is a place of safety and is designed as a calming environment for any learner who needs it

- Explain to that the room can be used when s/he becomes aware that s/he is starting to get upset, get worried or get angry.  Use language that is simple and positively stated

- Explain that the calm room will be for them when they are in it but that it is a space that can be used by all students if they feel they need it

- Staff should avoid entering the calm room unless absolutely necessary, i.e. to keep the child/young person safe, or unless the they have asked the staff member to join them in the room

- The calm room should not be used on a 'scheduled' basis as it is meant to be used as and when a child/young person is starting to show signs that they may become upset or demonstrating that they need a break to avoid a critical incident and to regain a sense of calm

- The best outcome of using the calm room is when a student learns how to 'self-regulate' independently and is able to calm him/herself down

- The calm room needs to be used with a quiet and positive approach in order to help reduce anxiety. This means using a planned and sensitive method to help the student move towards the room and during and after they have spent time there

- When introducing the student to the concept of the calm room, it may be beneficial for them to spend five to ten minutes in there, depending on their age.  They can lie down on something comfortable if they want to (e.g. a bean bag, or gym mat) or they can stand and move around if they want to.  This introduction session, which can be delivered by a member of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), LSA or teacher/instructor, should be used in a proactive manner and when the child is calm and receptive, in order to help her/him feel good about being there

- Following the introductory session(s), when the learner has been able to spend time in the room while in a pleasant and quiet frame of mind, the next step is to explain that the calm room will also be available when they need a place to de-stress, help them stop worrying or help them to feel less angry.  It is important to explain that a member of staff may suggest that 'this is a good time to use the calm room' or the child themselves may feel that 'this is a good time to use the calm room'.

## 6.  Further Best Practice for the Use of Calm Rooms – Planned Intervention

In optimum circumstances, the individual student will choose to be proactive in regulating their emotions and access the calm room with limited intervention from staff members.  In exceptional circumstances however, when the student is placing themselves or others at immediate risk or is too heightened to be able to make this informed choice, staff may be required to accompany a child or young person to the calm room using agreed positive handling strategies.  It is important to note that supported intervention at this level will be reflected in IRA's and BSP's.  Note: some learners will have been assessed as being too

high risk to warrant use of restrictive physical intervention to a calm room and will require intervention procedures as per their Rapid Response Plans.

The use of seclusion into a calm room is viewed as restrictive physical intervention. It is only used as part of a holistic broad approach to the management of extreme challenging behaviour. The inappropriate use of seclusion may be unlawful, as will any unreasonable use of force where there is no legal justification.

The calm room should only be used after a range of de-escalation strategies have been exhausted and have failed to calm the student. Depending upon the nature of the specific incident, such strategies can include a change of face, working alongside a different staff member or taking time-out in the Student Support and Wellbeing Officer's (SSWO) office. However, urgent intervention via use of MAPA responses may be necessary and a decision to use physical intervention to support the student in accessing the calm room should be based upon a dynamic risk assessment made by a trained member of staff. The use of force is likely to be legally defensible when it is required to prevent:

- self-harming

- injury to other children, service-users, staff or teachers

- damage to property

- an offence being committed and

- any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline within the school


The following approach should be adopted for all learners who need planned intervention to access the calm room:

- When a member of staff notices that a child/young person is becoming anxious or agitated, the individual should be given reasonable opportunity to calm using the strategies detailed in their individual behaviour plan

- If the student's behaviour continues to cause concern and is reaching a point where they are affecting other learners, and/or they become a danger to themselves, other learners or staff, they should be prompted to make 'the right choice' and comply with reasonable requests from staff. Note: information in Rapid Response Plans should be followed from this point and a different approach adopted if it has been assessed as being too high risk to adopt MAPA responses When a particularly challenging incident arises, staff should consider the balance of risks between managing the situation where it is happening and withdrawing

with everyone to create a calming area, compared with moving the pupil to a calm room, possibly with a physical intervention, and then withdrawing

- Other staff should be alerted, via walkie-talkie, for support as appropriate and a member of SLT should be alerted to the situation so that they can offer direct operational support

- If the student continues to escalate their behaviour or is in a position where they are not able to make rationale choices, staff should suggest 'this is a good time to use the calm room'

- Subject to a dynamic risk assessment, and one of the five legally defensible criteria (as detailed above) apply, appropriately trained staff may consider it necessary to escort the child/young person to the calm room using an approved MAPA physical intervention hold in line with Cambian Policy, the DfE's 'Use of Reasonable Force', July 2013 and the DfE's 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools', January 2016.  During incidents of restricted physical intervention, (RPI), a trained member of staff must observe to ensure correct holds have been adopted, advise staff accordingly and ensure the well-being of the child/young person is secure.  The observer must note the type of holds adopted and the length of time such holds have been adopted for the purposes of accurate record-keeping

- Once in the calm room, staff should try to resolve the situation satisfactorily with the child/young person spending the minimum time necessary in the calm room; a change of face can be a useful strategy as can minimum interaction whilst the situation calms.  At no time must a child/young person be left unsupervised in the calm room; staff must be able to see them through a window.  Access to the toilet and food/drink must be given if required.

- At no time should any student be locked in the calm room.  If a student tries to leave the calm room before they are ready, staff should use low and slow responses to direct the learner to stay.  In extreme cases when the learner is very

angry and unable to process requests, a member of the SLT may need to implement a dynamic risk assessment

- The staff members involved are responsible for recording the incident appropriately in line with school policy and the Behaviour Coordinator ensures that Commissioners and Local Authorities are appraised of matters within 24 hours

- BSP's and IRA's are updated accordingly, and the child/young person's timetable will be reviewed to reflect bespoke interventions, designed to support emotional regulation and the well-being of the learner

## 7. Reviewing the Use of RPI further to Planned Intervention

A post incident review will take place within 1 week of the event and should assess whether:

- The use of planned intervention to the calm room is an effective response and how this compares with other possible responses or strategies

- It offers a lower level of intrusion than other possible responses or interventions

- It offers improved safety for the child/young person and those around them

- It helps the individual to calm and return to base-line behaviour as or more effectively than other responses or strategies

- It decreases the probability of the same behaviour occurring in the future when taken in the context of the student's Individual Behaviour Plan

The '**45.13 Staff Reflective Debrief Form**' and '**CSHS-RDFS Reflective Debrief Form Students**' are to be used for the post-incident reviews.

Individual Behaviour Plans are reviewed at least twice a year.  Reviewing the use of calm rooms is an integral part of SLT responses to reviewing individuals' behaviour and data is collated to support decision-making in the best interest of the child/young person. Weekly recorded 'Spotlight' meetings are also tabled so that a wider professional response can influence strategies and interventions to support the immediate needs of a child/young person whose current behavioural presentation is causing particular concern.

At any point, if a staff member is unclear about strategies/techniques to support young people in crisis, they must discuss with their immediate line manager in the first instance.

# Reflective Debrief for Staff

| Name of the school/home | |
|---|---|
| Date | |
| Staff leading the session and their role | |
| Staff involved in the session and their role | |
| Description of event this reflective debrief is related to | |
| Accident/ Incident reference no | |

**Please record discussion in the space provided for each of the following sections (1-5) on pages 2- 4**

1. **Describe the event**

- What happened?

- Who was involved?

- What did you expect was going to happen?

- What was important to you at the time?

- What did you like/dislike about the event?

- Do you have fears/anxieties following the event?

- Are you worried that this can happen again?

2. **What happened leading up to the event?**

- What happened for you and others in the time leading up to the event?

- What were the feelings and emotions of you have experienced at the time?

- What are your feelings and emotions now?

3. **How do you feel things went during the event?**

- What went well during and post the event?

- What didn't go so well?

- What has changed during the event and why?
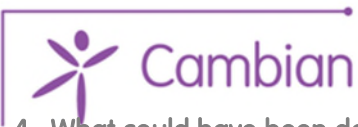
**4. What could have been done differently?**

Existing knowledge can be built on or restructured by theorising about what could have been done differently. In order for this to be effective critical thinking in a safe learning environment is essential with a **'no blame' attitude.**

**5. What do we need to change as a result of this reflective debrief?**

Each reflection can inform practice and should be used not only as a building block to learning but as a celebration of good practice. Reflection is not a passive contemplation but an active, deliberate process that requires commitment, energy and a willingness to learn as a team.

1. Describe the event

2. What happened leading up to the event?

3. How do you feel things went during the event?

4.  What could have been done differently?

5. What do we need to change as a result of this reflective debrief?

# Reflective Debrief Form - Students

Prior to starting this, please ensure that the individual is physically and emotionally in control so thoughts and perceptions aren't led by irritation / anger and can be more factual and considered.

| | |
|---|---|
| Location | |
| Date of Debrief | |
| Staff leading the session and their role | |
| Student involved in the session | |
| Brief summary of event, as recorded, that this reflective debrief is related to | |
| Date of Incident | |
| Accident/Incident Reference No. | |

Please record discussion in the space provided below. Follow the guidance, using language appropriate to the Young Person then you can delete it, leaving just the headline & their response.

### The Facts

Establish what has happened, factually. How something has made someone feel is important to understand in terms of being able to empathise but the number 1 priority is establishing the basic facts / timeline of the incident. If multiple people were there and have differing accounts then it doesn't necessarily mean someone is lying or wrong, but could have arrived at a different time from a different angle etc so heard and observed things differently.

### Antecedents / Triggers / Patterns

Are there patterns in past behaviour and events preceding the crisis? Can you identify triggers for that particular behaviour?

### Alternatives

Can they identify different ways to manage their behaviour? Are there any resources that would be useful in making changes in terms of sensory need?

### Negotiate Adaptations

Look at behaviour contracts, expectations etc. Expectation needs to be clear and make sure they have an understanding of both positive and negative consequences for behaviour.

### Offer Support / Give Back Control

Return (appropriate levels of) control where possible to the young person. Give back responsibility to control own behaviour, along with your support and encouragement.

A little bit of control given goes a huge way to building rapport, respect & trust and will only strengthen your relationship with the young person.

This form has been guided by the Crisis Prevention Institute's C.O.P.I.N.G Model.