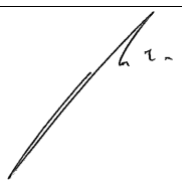
Beaucroft Foundation School & College

Gym Policy

Date Adopted: 10/11/2026
Review term: Three years
School Lead: Rob Sallows – Deputy Headteacher
Linked Governor: Noel Harrison – Chair of Resources Committee
Signed By: 

Beaucroft Foundation School

1. Purpose

This policy sets out Beaucroft Foundation School's arrangements for the safe, inclusive and effective teaching and use of cardio exercise equipment by pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

It supports pupils to develop physical fitness, coordination, confidence, independence and healthy lifestyle habits while ensuring that equipment is used in a way that is appropriate to each pupil's individual needs, abilities, communication profile and assessed level of risk.

This policy applies to all cardio exercise equipment used at the school, including:

- Motorised treadmills and walking/running machines
- Exercise bikes and recumbent bikes
- Cross trainers and elliptical trainers
- Rowing machines
- Steppers
- Other electrically or mechanically operated cardio equipment

Particular attention is given to motorised treadmills because of the risks associated with a moving belt, changes in speed, falls, entrapment and inappropriate use.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Pupils 10 years or over who have been assessed as having the physical, cognitive and communication ability to use cardio exercise equipment safely.
- Pupils below the age of 10 years who have been assessed as having the physical, cognitive and communication ability to use cardio exercise equipment safely as part of an individualised OT programme on a 1:1 basis.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and other adults supervising pupils
- Staff responsible for physical education, exercise, therapy, sensory regulation or wellbeing activities
- Visitors, volunteers and external professionals using the equipment with pupils
- Equipment used during curriculum lessons, interventions, enrichment activities, therapy programmes and individual exercise programmes

This policy should be read alongside Beaucroft Foundation School's current:

- Health and Safety Policy

- Behaviour Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Medical Needs Policy
- Individual equipment Risk Assessment
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

3. Principles

Beaucroft Foundation School is committed to ensuring that pupils have equitable and meaningful opportunities to take part in physical activity.
Exercise programmes must:

1. Promote inclusion, participation and pupil choice.
2. Be appropriate to the pupil's chronological age, developmental level and physical ability.
3. Take account of the pupil's individual SEND profile.
4. Consider relevant medical, physical, sensory, communication and behavioural needs.
5. Promote independence wherever this can be achieved safely.
6. Use reasonable adjustments to enable participation.
7. Be informed by an individual or class risk assessment, as appropriate.
8. Be delivered by staff who have been instructed and assessed as competent.
9. Prioritise safety, wellbeing and positive engagement over performance or exercise intensity.
10. Ensure that no pupil is pressured to use equipment when distressed, dysregulated, unwell or unable to participate safely.

4. Individual Assessment and Risk Management

Before a pupil uses cardio equipment as part of a planned programme, staff must read the relevant gym and equipment risk assessments and ensure that an appropriate individual or class risk assessment is in place. (Individual Equipment Risk Assessments can be located in all staff teams, Gym Risk Assessments, Cardiovascular Gym Equipment Risk Assessments.

The assessment should consider:

- Physical ability, mobility, balance, coordination and gait
- Cardiovascular fitness and exercise tolerance
- Relevant medical conditions and healthcare plans
- Medication that may affect exercise tolerance, alertness or balance
- Seizure or epilepsy considerations, where applicable
- Visual or hearing impairment
- Sensory processing and regulation needs

- Communication needs and the pupil's understanding of instructions and safety rules
- Impulsivity, anxiety, fear or behaviours that may create risk
- The pupil's ability to recognise and communicate pain, discomfort, fatigue or illness
- The pupil's ability to stop the equipment safely
- Previous experience with similar equipment
- The level of adult or physical support required
- Emergency evacuation requirements

Where a medical condition could affect exercise, staff must follow the pupil's individual healthcare plan and seek advice from parents/carers and relevant healthcare professionals where necessary. Consent and information-sharing arrangements must follow the school's established procedures.

Risk assessments must be reviewed following an accident or near miss; a significant change in need, medication, medical advice, ability or independence; the introduction of new equipment; or any concern raised by the pupil, parents/carers, staff or a professional.

Completed Individual and group risk assessments should be uploaded to the system in the following location, All staff Team, Gym Risk Assessments, Individual and Class Gym Risk Assessments.

5. Staff Competence

Only staff who have received appropriate instruction and have been deemed competent may teach or supervise pupils using cardio exercise equipment.

Staff must be familiar with:

- The safe operation and adjustment of each item of equipment
- Emergency stop procedures
- The school's relevant risk assessments
- Individual pupil risk assessments and healthcare plans
- Appropriate warm-up and cool-down routines
- Signs of fatigue, overheating, distress, dysregulation and physical difficulty
- Accident, first-aid and emergency procedures

Staff must not use equipment with pupils if they are unfamiliar with its operation or safety features. Where specialist equipment forms part of a therapeutic or rehabilitation programme, staff must follow the written advice of the relevant qualified professional.

6. General Rules for Pupils

Before using cardio equipment, pupils must be taught, at an age- and ability-appropriate level:

- The purpose of the equipment
- How to mount and dismount safely
- Where to stand or sit
- How the equipment starts and stops, including use of the emergency stop control
- The speed or resistance setting agreed by staff
- How to recognise when they need to stop
- How to communicate if they feel unwell, frightened, uncomfortable or fatigued
- Why moving parts must not be touched unless the equipment is specifically designed for this
- Why running, jumping or climbing onto equipment is prohibited
- Why loose clothing, jewellery, unsecured long hair and inappropriate footwear may create risk

Instructions must be adapted to the pupil's communication profile and may include visual instructions, symbols, photographs, demonstration, short verbal instructions, Makaton or another communication system, social stories, first/then language, individual prompts or agreed physical guidance.

7. Motorised Treadmills

Motorised treadmills require enhanced control because the belt moves independently of the user.

Before use

The supervising member of staff must check that:

- The treadmill is on a stable, level surface with adequate clear space around it
- The emergency stop key or control is present, accessible and functioning
- The treadmill has no visible damage and the belt is correctly aligned
- The power cable is secure and does not create a trip hazard
- No objects are on or immediately around the belt
- The pupil is wearing appropriate footwear and any loose clothing, jewellery or long hair is secured
- The pupil understands the relevant safety instructions and agreed stopping signal
- The machine is set to a safe minimum starting speed

During use

- The level and position of supervision must follow the pupil's risk assessment; an inexperienced or higher-risk pupil must be supervised within immediate reach of the emergency stop.
- The pupil must mount the stationary treadmill before the belt is started and must remain facing forwards unless a specifically assessed therapeutic programme states otherwise.

- Speed and incline must be increased gradually and only by the supervising adult unless independent adjustment has been explicitly assessed as safe.
- The emergency stop key should be attached to the pupil where appropriate and tolerated.
- The treadmill must be stopped immediately if the pupil shows pain, breathing difficulty, marked fatigue, distress, loss of balance, unsafe behaviour or asks to stop.
- The belt must come to a complete stop before the pupil dismounts.

If the treadmill is damaged, faulty or behaving unexpectedly, it must not be used. Staff must isolate it from use and report the defect through the school's maintenance procedures.

8. Equipment Checks and Maintenance

Cardio equipment must be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and Beaucroft Foundation School's inspection and servicing arrangements. Staff must complete an appropriate visual and operational check before use.

Equipment must be withdrawn from use immediately if there is evidence of:

- Damage, loose components or unstable movement
- Unusual noise or abnormal belt movement
- Electrical faults, damaged cables or plugs
- A faulty emergency stop mechanism
- Any other condition that could reasonably compromise safety

Out-of-service equipment must be clearly marked to prevent use and reported promptly to the designated lead or site team. Only appropriately authorised and competent persons may carry out repairs or maintenance. Staff and pupils must not attempt to repair electrical or mechanical equipment.

Inspection, servicing, defects and repairs must be recorded in accordance with the school's equipment management procedures.

9. Training, Incidents and Review of Practice

The school will ensure that staff responsible for cardio exercise equipment receive suitable induction and instruction. Refresher training will be provided when new equipment is introduced, following a significant incident or near miss, when staff competence is in doubt, or when a risk assessment identifies a need.

All accidents, injuries, equipment failures and near misses must be reported and recorded under the school's established procedures. First aid must be provided without delay, parents/carers informed as appropriate, and any statutory reporting requirements considered by the leadership team.

Learning from incidents will be used to update risk assessments, staff instruction, pupil programmes and this policy.

10. Responsibilities

Headteacher and Leadership Team

- Ensure that suitable policies and risk assessments are in place
- Ensure equipment is appropriately located, inspected, maintained and serviced
- Ensure staff are suitably trained and sufficient staffing is available
- Ensure incidents are investigated and actions completed

PE Lead or Equipment Coordinator

- Coordinate the safe use of equipment
- Ensure staff receive appropriate instruction
- Monitor equipment condition and maintain relevant records
- Support the development of individual exercise programmes
- Review risk assessments and respond to reported concerns

Staff

- Follow this policy, relevant risk assessments and healthcare plans
- Supervise pupils at the assessed level
- Complete required pre-use checks
- Use communication and reasonable adjustments matched to the pupil
- Report defects, accidents and near misses
- Stop the activity whenever safety or wellbeing cannot be maintained

Pupils

Pupils will be supported to follow safety instructions, use equipment appropriately, communicate problems or discomfort, respect others using the equipment, and follow agreed start and stop procedures.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers should provide relevant and current medical information, share concerns that may affect safe participation, and work with the school and professionals when an individual programme requires review.

11. Prohibited Practices

The following practices are not permitted:

- Allowing an untrained or non-competent adult to supervise equipment use
- Allowing pupils to use damaged, faulty or uninspected equipment
- Leaving an inexperienced or higher-risk pupil unsupervised on a motorised treadmill
- Allowing pupils to alter settings unless this has been assessed as safe

- Allowing a pupil to jump onto or off a moving treadmill
- Using exercise as a punishment or consequence
- Requiring a distressed, dysregulated or unwell pupil to continue exercising
- Using physical restraint simply to maintain participation
- Ignoring a pupil's communication of pain, fear, fatigue or significant discomfort
- Allowing equipment misuse that creates a foreseeable risk of injury
- Allowing more than one pupil on equipment designed for a single user

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner following any serious incident, significant near miss, substantial change in equipment, relevant change in a pupil population or need, or change in legislation, guidance or school practice.